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Geneva, 18–20 June 2018
Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Is there a need for communication makeover in statistical institutes?

Note by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Croatia

Summary

The note presents a case for renewing the communication strategy of a statistical office to meet the new challenges. In the modern society official statistics are expected to communicate not only data and information but also their value, in line with the vision, purpose and defined strategic goals. The way in which statistical authorities express themselves can influence their image, reputation and visibility among stakeholders, users and the general public.

Organizing modern communication requires flexibility and openness, as well as cooperation with a broad range of organizational units. Statistical authorities need a modern, proactive communication strategy with clearly defined key messages and a list of communication tactics for different target groups on different communication channels. Modern communication strategy should be a living document that is reviewed periodically – in accordance with the strategic plan, future activities and the best practices used by others.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 1 "Strategic communications" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. Changes in the society have produced challenges in all phases of statistical production, but the demand for data and changes in perception of its importance have naturally caused a shift towards better communication and presentation. National Statistical Institutes all over the world are therefore willingly embracing different initiatives from European and international organizations which aim to increase the emphasis on communication of official statistics. The ESS Vision 2020 provided institutions dealing with official statistics a guiding frame for the further development. The ESS Vision 2020 is a clear indication that user orientation is recognised as a priority, and that special attention should be given to dissemination and communication.

2. On the other hand, UNECE High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics is continuously working on modernisation topics with the recent focus on communication within The Strategic Communication Framework. These initiatives demonstrate that communication is becoming vital part of statistical processes. Many institutions recognized the need for communication makeover and are already using the given opportunities to engage themselves in the available projects on the principle of learning by working. The achievements and the results from this teamwork will serve as a solid ground for further improvements.

3. Although communication was for decades considered as a part of dissemination, changes in modern society and key trends have forced the NSI´s to think "outside the box" and to increasingly become output oriented using several different approaches, instead of general one. The usage of modern information technology, followed by imminent data revolution, has affected the changes of the users´ expectations and behaviour. All this resulted in gradual abandoning of the old dissemination methods (where the statistical process ended with making the data available to users) and moving towards communication and building users relationships.

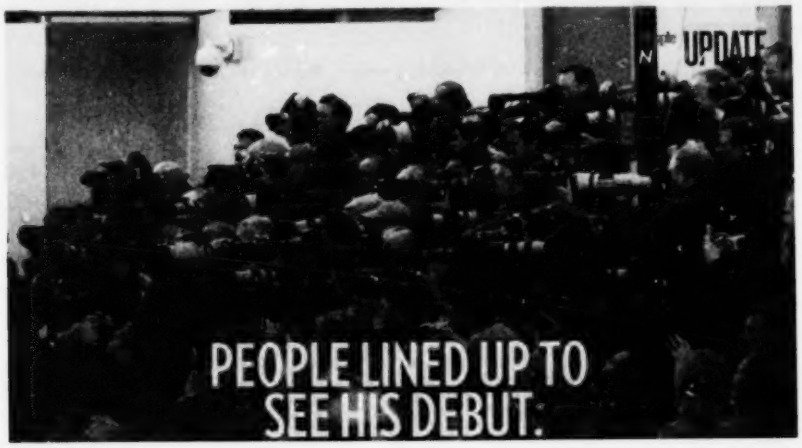
4. Since official statistics is a public good that serves the society by providing coherent evidence for making the sound and sustainable decisions, NSI´s should do their best to maintain the relevance of official statistics as a trustworthy source of information. In this process, communication is playing the key role. The lack of a proactive communication strategy may result with reputational loss and diminishing trust in statistics which we do not wish to face.

II. Time, attention and relevance have become scarce resources – use it wisely

5. Use of traditional communication tools such as press releases or press conferences and the exclusive use of traditional communication channels such as newspaper or television is no longer sufficient. Traditional tools and channels should not be marginalised or underestimated but, in the information era, it is hard to depend only on third parties. Journalists and media representatives might or might not recognise the relevance of a particular statistical release and may decide to give statistics a few lines or a few seconds of media space.

6. The most recent example is Eurostat´s release of government deficit and debt data, based on figures reported for the purpose of the excessive deficit procedure (EDP). The release was planned in advance. It usually grabs a lot of media attention but coincidentally on the same day Prince William and Kate Middleton's third royal baby was born. That was the news of the day, not only in the UK and Europe but also in the world´s media.

Picture 1
Media representatives in front of St. Mary's hospital



Source: people.com

7. NSIs have the opportunity to communicate directly with their target audience using new communication channels and tools but have to find the most suitable mode of communicating to different users on the different platforms.

8. The usage of digital technology decentralized traditional communication where the media played the main role in spreading information, thus allowing NSIs to share facts and figures while creating relationship with the current users and reaching potential users. Communication officers have opportunity to create a positive influence on NSIs' image, reputation and visibility among stakeholders, users and general public if they use scarce resources such as time, attention and relevance wisely.

A. Time

9. The study by Dr. Thurman has shown that online editions have doubled or tripled the number of readers of national newspapers but the increased exposure disguises huge differences in attention paid by print and online readers. The print newspapers are read for an average of 40 minutes per day, while online visitors to the websites and apps of those same newspapers spend an average of just 30 seconds per day.

10. What does it mean? Preparing data and information for different communication channels requires distinct methods and principles due to the fact the users spend selective time reading the same information on different platforms. Therefore, the content should be adapted to achieve the maximum communication effect. The statistical article prepared for the website and shared through mailing list to journalists who asked for news releases should contain more data, analysis and methodology than the release on the social media whose main goal is to grab attention and lead the reader to the website.

B. Attention

11. One of the most famous Bill Gates quotes is "content is king", but even the best content needs an effective communication strategy. Marshall McLuhan said it best with his famous adage "the medium is the message".

12. One of the best ways to grab someone's attention in short and scarce time slot, is to have perfect content on the appropriate communication platform. Identifying the best "medium" can mean the difference between good content being lost in the shuffle and reaching the perfect audience.

13. According to B2C[1] Content Marketing report, the top three most effective types of content B2C marketers use are:

- Social media posts;
- Videos (pre-produced);
- Illustrations/photos.

14. Although NSI´s are generally not profit-oriented institutions, they are communicating with users on a similar basis, using the best possible and most effective solutions on different media platforms to help their institution achieve specific objectives. The statistical language used is of utmost importance when trying to grab attention of the different user groups. When communicating with the proficient statistical users who are familiar with the methodology, we should utilize statistical terminology to make statistical analysis and share the results. On the other hand, when communicating with the general public we should use plain language to help them understand the message we are trying to send.

C. Relevance

15. The relevance of the specific statistical theme depends on various factors that usually cannot be predicted in advance. To make statistics relevant all the time and not only when it is in focus by the public, due to drastic changes in trends, we could use data storytelling as a regular method of communication. The selection of potential interesting or nice-to-know topics can be connected to celebrating different national or international days, holidays, specific theme that arose in the media or something that can be characterised as special and of wide interest to the public.

16. Additionally, but not less importantly accent on the relevance of official statistics can be obtained with statistical literacy content. Education materials such as e-books, videos, games or similar content are building up the relevance by giving added value to the usual daily content.

III. Revive your communication strategy - re-set, re-adjust, re-start, re-focus… as many times as you need to

17. If you have the feeling that you are working hard and not accomplishing very much, then you are probably stuck in a circle where all efforts made cannot result with tangible and easily seen results. The main challenges you need to cope with in this situation is to decide where you want to go, or in other words, it is essential to focus on what you want to achieve and how you are planning to achieve it. These are the challenges every institution is facing without exemption so achievement plans should be re-evaluated from time to time, especially when the obtained results are not in line with planned ones.

[1] B2C - Business-to-consumer – refers to commerce between a business and an individual consumer. While it applies to any type of direct-to-consumer selling, it has come to be associated with online selling, also known as e-commerce or e-tailing.

18. It is always good to start from the beginning. In our case with the institution's vision and mission whose main purpose is to show a clear direction to all individuals and the management. The best-case scenario is when everyone in the institution understands the importance of these statements and when everyone is literally living them in their own surroundings. That kind of synergy makes the difference and pulls the institution towards unique goal.

19. The vision as a future oriented declaration of the institution's purpose, and the mission as a general plan for achieving that vision are usually defined in a main strategic document, the general strategy of the institution. Although institutions have only one vision and mission, they may have several additional strategies addressing the core values of the institution or focusing on the general goals of the institution. The communication strategy, as well as every other defined strategy, surely has to be in line with the general one, usually called umbrella strategy.

20. As statistical institutions are unique and the scope of statistical activities can be challenging to explain and to communicate, we should be as creative and innovative as we can in setting up our communication strategies. As Christine Cawthorne said when giving the keynote speech at New Techniques and Technologies for Statistics (NTTS) conference "Sorry Statisticians, but marketing is your job too."

A. Communication goals

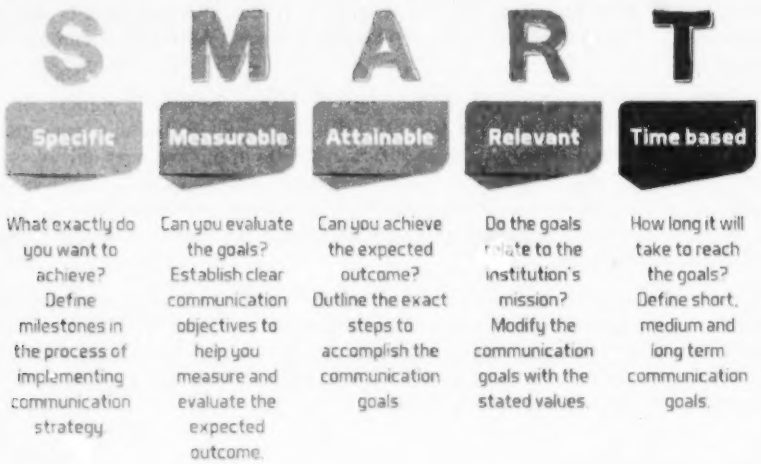
21. Institutions can have different communication goals that will define if their communication strategy is proactive or reactive. The main question is how communication activities can support the implementation of our strategic communication goals that can be different from one institution to another mainly due to different level of development of institutions as well as the statistical system in general in certain country.

22. If the institution decides to communicate proactively, and that is the latest communication trend we are all striving to, the defined communication goals can be:

- improve the promotion of official statistics and the work of a statistical institute within the statistical system;
- improve the promotion of institution's products and services;
- provide added value – e.g. educational aspects;
- improve the data storytelling method;
- increase the usage of visualisation to communicate data;
- reduce misunderstanding and misinterpretation of statistical data, etc.

23. The goals should be designed to supplement each other and focus on what you want to achieve. Furthermore, we should have on mind not to set too many goals as we might lose focus. When thinking about setting communication goals, bear on mind the SMART principle:

Figure 1
SMART goal setting

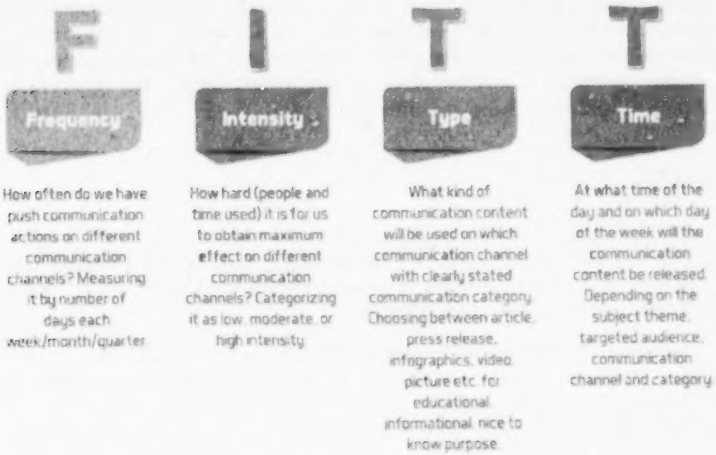

S
M
A
R
T
Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Time based
What exactly do you want to achieve? Define milestones in the process of implementing communication strategy.
Can you evaluate the goals? Establish clear communication objectives to help you measure and evaluate the expected outcome.
Can you achieve the expected outcome? Outline the exact steps to accomplish the communication goals.
Do the goals relate to the institution's mission? Modify the communication goals with the stated values.
How long it will take to reach the goals? Define short, medium and long term communication goals.

B. Communication objectives

24. Clearly defined objectives are turning communication goal's general statement of what is to be accomplished into a specific, quantifiable, time-sensitive statement of what is going to be achieved and when it will be achieved. For the successful implementation of communication strategy, the goals and the objectives have to be clearly planned in detailed action plan, often called strategic planning. Communication action plans should be specific actions or activities that will be used to achieve a goal within the constraints of the objective. Thriving action plan should be as simple as possible with enough information to capture the essence. For communication purposes we made initial action plan based on the FITT principle (see Figure 2).

25. The communication action plan has to be seen as a fluid document due to unplanned activities and unpredictable situations every statistical institution is facing from time to time.

Figure 2
FITT action plan setting


F
I
T
T
Frequency
Intensity
Type
Time
How often do we have push communication actions on different communication channels? Measuring it by number of days each week/month/quarter
How hard (people and time used) it is for us to obtain maximum effect on different communication channels? Categorizing it as low, moderate, or high intensity
What kind of communication content will be used on which communication channel with clearly stated communication category. Choosing between article, press release, infographics, video, picture etc. for educational, informational, nice to know purpose.
At what time of the day and on which day of the week will the communication content be released. Depending on the subject theme, targeted audience, communication channel and category

IV. Conclusion

26. The communication strategy is a living document and surely cannot be seen as something that is "cast in stone". It can and should be updated and modified as many times as necessary to assure the fulfilment of set communication goals.

27. One of the communication goals of the CBS for 2017 was to successfully organize national phase of the European Statistics Competition in Croatia for the first time and at the same time increase statistical literacy within secondary school students. As all defined objectives for both goals were either fulfilled or exceeded, both communication goals were reached with the results that were above all our expectations. Although we got tangible proof that we have made successful makeover of CBS's communication strategy, one additional recognition arrived from the Croatian Public Relations Association.

28. Since 2007, every year, the Croatian Public Relations Association is organizing the competition called Grand PRix as an acknowledgment of recognition to colleagues for excellence in the design and implementation of strategic communications and public relations projects. The competition has several categories and one of them is Grand Prix for public relations in government bodies of the Republic of Croatia for which the CBS was awarded for the successful communication of the national phase of ESC. Two years before we entered in finals (top three communication projects), did not receive the award for 2015 but had enough time to fine tune the communication strategy that has proven to be good decision from different perspectives.

29. Although in our team no one had any prior experience in communication, the mindsets of individuals with the full support of the Director General made the positive movement towards the image of modern, user-centric proactive statistical institution. Since the communication strategy needs to be completely evaluated from time to time with adequate measurement tools we are anxiously waiting for the new round of User satisfaction survey. The comprehensive results regarding reputation of official statistics and the visibility among stakeholders, users and the public will be analysed in detail and depending on the obtained results further steps will be undertaken.

30. If communication officers, and above all, management of statistical institutions want to live happily ever after, they should be aware that statistical authorities need a modern, proactive communication strategy with clearly defined key messages and a list of communication tactics for different target groups on different communication channels. Modern communication strategy is a living document that should be reviewed periodically – in accordance with the strategic plan, future activities and the best practices used by others. Being strategic is a state of mind and understanding the importance of communication is what really makes the difference.

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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Integrating changing user behaviour into a communications strategy at Eurostat

Note by Eurostat

Summary

This document focuses on the recent and ongoing changes to Eurostat's communications strategy and actions in view of the changing behaviour of European statistics users.

Starting in January 2017, Eurostat intensified its efforts in the area of communication, recognising its crucial importance for a more efficient dissemination of data and a better understanding of the needs of users. What followed was a thorough re-thinking of Eurostat's communications approach, which continues at the same brisk pace to this day.

This document briefly outlines the changes in user behaviour which prompted the re-thinking of communications, explains the rationale behind the need to modify the way Eurostat communicates with its users, and presents communication actions introduced recently as well as Eurostat's aspirations for the future.

It is hoped that it will contribute in a meaningful way to the ongoing discussion about the importance of making official statistics better known to citizens and policymakers alike.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 1: "Strategic communications" for discussion.

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I. How has user behaviour changed?

1. The majority of today's data users are not prepared to spend a long time looking for the statistics they need. Their attention span has become significantly shorter and they expect to find what they need very quickly. Users want the data to be presented to them in an easily-digestible format, featuring less text and more accompanying infographics.

2. They also want to have an opportunity to react immediately to our data and ask questions in relation to a given data set, figure or concept. Often, they would also like to comment on the statistics they consulted, share them with friends or post a link on a social media channel of their choice.

3. This shift in user behaviour patterns has, for instance, been reflected in the decreasing numbers of downloads of complete statistical publications on Eurostat's website and the explosion in the number of mentions of Eurostat on social media.

II. Operating in a new reality

4. Due to rapid advancements in IT and new media technologies, we are currently witnessing an explosion of information, the likes of which has never been seen before.

5. Today, European citizens are universally connected and digitally aware. They have a multitude of new data sources at their disposal, access to which could not be easier or more tempting.

6. Providers of other, non-official data increasingly compete with official statisticians by producing more timely, but often less reliable information.

7. In this "post-truth" era of social media, "fake news" and "alternative facts", reliable and trustworthy official statistics are needed more than ever. It is safe to assume that their value will only increase with time.

8. However, this new reality also demands rapid and efficient responses on the part of official statistics producers. They need to evolve and change their often conventional approach to the communication of their products and services if they want to stay relevant.

9. In fact, official statisticians should strive to become better known, improve the way they explain the meaning of their work to citizens, and remind them that reliable statistics on their region, country and continent constitute an essential public service for a democratic society.

10. In other words, it is of key importance that official statistics effectively reach wider audiences and their added-value is beyond any doubt.

III. New ways to communicate statistics more effectively

11. A considerable amount of work was done in this respect by Eurostat last year and it has shown immediate and positive results. For instance, in 2017, the number of mentions of Eurostat in the media and social media went up by 16%, while the number of individual data extractions from our website went up by 12%, as compared to 2016.

12. In 2017, Eurostat started the process of renewing and overhauling its website to make it simpler, easier to use and visually more appealing, in line with its policy of making access to data easier for all users.

13. Three innovative and interactive digital publications on topics close to citizens, "The life of women and men in Europe", "Energy union" and "The digital single market" were unveiled on Eurostat's website. They met with vivid interest on the part of various user groups and the feedback received confirmed users' interest in this type of novel and interactive data presentation.

14. Due to intense reader interest, "The life of women and men in Europe" was translated into the 24 official languages of the European Union by the national statistical institutes, which only added to the uniqueness of the production processes of the official statistics in the EU.

15. Eurostat is currently working on further digital publications. The next one to be unveiled this year will focus on the Sustainable Development Goals in an EU context.

16. Last year, Eurostat also started publishing European data in a new format, which complemented its well-established news releases. A dedicated statistical news section called 'What's New?' was launched in January 2017. It features short news items published on a daily basis, written in plain English and accompanied by colourful infographics. They provide users with statistics that are easily understandable and relate directly to their daily lives.

17. Since its launch, the news section has proved extremely popular with key users, registering over 700 000 views in the first year of its operation. It has quickly become an important additional source of statistical information released by Eurostat, with news items regularly picked up by and featured in international media outlets, including European newspapers, television and radio stations and social media channels.

18. A recent review of the news section revealed that the most popular news items were nearly always data-driven and concerned topics of common interest to all Europeans, such as food prices, wage disparities and the gender pay gap in the EU. Another group of particularly popular news items included national days celebrated by EU member states and international days jointly marked across Europe, such as International Women's Day.

19. On top of over 340 statistical news items featured in the "What's New?" section, in 2017 Eurostat also issued around 200 news releases on key economic indicators. Together, they more than doubled the amount of statistical information published by Eurostat in 2016. This enabled Eurostat to significantly extend the range of topics it covered, including important international events and summits. This development was also welcomed by international news outlets, which proceeded to base a significant number of their own stories on them.

VI. Going where the users are

20. Last year, Eurostat also boosted its presence on social media. In addition to the rapidly growing popularity of its Twitter account, a Facebook account was opened, which enlarged the user base and multiplied statistical messages even further.

21. More than 800 messages were tweeted through the year, with the Twitter account gaining nearly 25 000 new followers (in March 2018, the Eurostat Twitter account counted over 116 000 followers).

22. A social media review showed that Eurostat tweets were able to reach increasingly wide audiences. For example, a tweet on regional GDP per capita gained 180 000 views and generated more than 12 000 responses from users.

23. The Facebook account also quickly proved a big success with users of Eurostat's data, with around 400 uploaded posts in 2017 and a quickly growing number of followers

(in March 2018, their number reached over 20 000). The March 2018 post on the gender pay gap registered a record 3 million views.

V. Getting to know users better

24. In line with enhancing its range of communication activities, Eurostat is always looking for fresh feedback from its users. This feedback allows it to get a better understanding of user needs and preferences, and continually improve the products and services on offer to them.

25. Last year, Eurostat commissioned a study on "user perception and communication of official statistics in the EU". One of its aims was to get a better understanding of how statistics users perceive Eurostat and official statistics in the EU in general. This was carried out in comparison with competitors from the private sector.

26. This study goes hand in hand with increased in-depth user testing taking place at the moment and intense work on the definition of the needs of specific user groups. The findings should lead to concrete actions aiming at further improvement in the way Eurostat communicates official statistics.

VI. Future point of reference

27. In today's world when anybody with internet access can convey their opinions and all sorts of unsubstantiated information to a wider public, it is becoming crucial that citizens have a trustworthy place where they can verify the claims they encountered on social media and the internet.

28. The need for reliable, objective and timely statistics which help tackle the spread of misinformation and fake news is rapidly growing in importance. Eurostat's ambition is to become a trusted source of statistics, a point of reference for users and potential users of statistical information on Europe.

29. This aspiration goes together with the need to better educate the users of official statistics. A whole range of initiatives in this area has been started by Eurostat, including a new website section called 'Statistics4beginners' and the increased use of didactic videos and webinars targeting broader segments of non-specialised users.

30. In addition, numerous presentations of Eurostat's products and services are being made on an almost daily basis, targeting various types of audiences, including journalists, students, international organisations and institutions as well as members of the public.

VII. Tradition of confidentiality and privacy

31. At this stage, it might be worth briefly highlighting some of the strengths characterising the producers of official statistics.

32. The public must be aware that Eurostat and the national statistical institutes of the European Union do not compile detailed profiles of their users, which might one day end up being sold to third parties. In fact, the ESS can be proud of the solid reputation and long experience of user data protection.

33. It might not be universally known that all data collected by Eurostat and other official European statistics producers, united in the European Statistical System, are used only for statistical purposes.

34. The privacy of data providers, such as European households, enterprises and administrations, is defined in the European Statistics Code of Practice for the National and Community Statistical Authorities, with strict statistical confidentiality guaranteed in law.

VIII. Conclusion

35. Today, it is more important than ever, that producers of official statistics take a careful look at the way they communicate with their data users. Their habits and preferences have undergone a significant shift, in keeping with the changes to the way they read and absorb information on digital devices accessing the internet.

36. Since January 2017, Eurostat has been working hard to adapt the way it communicates with users of its products and services. From the start this work has received a significant boost in the form of continuous positive feedback from both specialised and non-specialised user groups.

37. The new communication approach has also received widespread support from Eurostat's staff, whose internal buy-in was instrumental for its success. Today, Eurostat's communication team works hand-in-hand with the production units to make the presentation of their data more customer-friendly.

38. All along, Eurostat has been working closely with other members of the European Statistical System, placing great emphasis on a smooth exchange of information and the sharing of best practice in the area of communication.

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Measuring what matters - broadening official statistics:
Session 1: Emerging topics

Measuring Security and Governance for Sustainable Development Goals

Note from the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (France)

Summary

The measure of governance and, to a lesser extent, security is not one of the long-standing areas covered by French official statistics. However, France is already in a position to inform several of the indicators for SDG 16 "Peace, justice and effective institutions". Sometimes it is by mobilizing administrative sources, but most often through victimization surveys. In order to improve its coverage of the SDGs, French public statistics is changing its household survey system in 2018, in particular to measure the extent of discrimination and corruption. Some indicators remain however not covered for the moment, either for technical reasons, or because the international operational definitions are not yet fixed, or because official statistics hesitates to invest new fields, in particular that of the governance, not always easy to conceptually understand and measure robustly.

The document is presented for consideration at the first session ("Emerging topics") of the seminar organized by Conference of European Statisticians on "Measuring what matters – Broadening official statistics".

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I. Context

1. The 16th Sustainable Development Goal, "Peace, Justice and Effective Institutions", emphasizes the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all and the strengthening of institutions that are responsible and effective at all levels. The indicators it promotes, and that it asks public statisticians to provide, focus on the security of people and property in their societies (including within families), as well as on trust in institutions and in the efficiency and perceived honesty of the latter.

2. The measurement of violence (whether physical, sexual or psychological), of corruption, or of individuals' appreciation of the quality of institutions, are not part of the French statistical tradition, such as it was built and developed, mainly in the second half of the 20th century. Public statistics focused mainly on economic development, on employment and working conditions, and on the resources and living conditions of households, in a society where security was considered to pose few problems, hence, corruption was considered almost absent in a so-called "developed" country and where the legitimacy of democratic institutions in the aftermath of the Second World War was the subject of a broad consensus. Under these conditions, the public statistician was essentially to measure the progress of the economy, the distribution of jobs and resources between social groups and their gradual access to the various goods and services produced by a growing society. The economic difficulties that have emerged in recent decades have heightened the needs on questions of unemployment, income inequality and economic and social precariousness, but without bringing security and good governance issues back to the forefront. However, in the early 2000s, in a context of growing awareness of concerns related to insecurity, which was further reinforced very recently following the wave of attacks, a national observatory of delinquency was created in 2003 and then, in 2014, a ministerial statistical service responsible for internal security matters and crime statistics.

3. Under these conditions, what can the public statistician provide to meet the challenges of the SDG16, and how can they organize themselves to meet these challenges in the coming years?

4. Some of the indicators have long been part of statistical production from the exploitation of administrative sources. This is the case for example with the number of victims of intentional homicide (16.1.1): there were 872 in 2015 in France. It is possible to provide breakdowns by gender and age according to the UN recommendation. It is also possible to estimate the number of conflict-related deaths (16.1.2), which is zero in France in 1995 because terrorist attacks are explicitly excluded. These data come from statistics compiled by the security forces (police and gendarmerie), through the analysis of their judicial procedures.

5. Similarly, the public statistics of the Ministry of Justice provide information on the proportion of the prison population that is in the process of being tried: 27.2% in 2015. This is also a long-standing statistical indicator collected by the UN in its database on crime and criminal justice[1].

6. Lastly, thanks to the Public Service Employment Information System built by aggregation of administrative files by the National Statistical Service, it is possible to fill in SDG 16.7.1 "Distribution of posts in public institutions by gender and age": In 2015, men held 37.2% of these positions and women 62.8, youth under 24 5.6% and people 50 and over 32.5%.

[1] See the UNODC web site: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/crime-and-criminal-justice.html

7. These indicators, derived from administrative data, have the advantage of being inexpensive to produce. We can also build them every year. But they represent only 4 of the 20 statistical indicators of the domain. To go further, it is necessary to resort to surveys of the population, which are richer, but also more expensive to produce.

8. Thus, three indicators come from victimization surveys, which began to develop in France at the end of the 20th century, first at the initiative of researchers and then in response to the European demand for social indicators. Since 2007, in response to a growing social demand and political interest on the themes of insecurity and delinquency, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), which is the French national statistics institute , has put in place a major annual survey of victimization, "Living environment and security"[2] which interviews face-to-face a representative sample of the population on the thefts and the assaults of which they were recently victims.

9. This survey shows the proportion of the population that experienced physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months, which is 2.4% of those 18 to 75 years old. Note that this figure does not fully correspond to indicator 16.1.3, which also includes psychological abuse, for reasons that we will discuss later. On the other hand, it includes the violence suffered within the family, including within the couple, thanks to a specific collection protocol, which limits the possible embarrassment of the interviewee towards the investigator and avoids putting victims of violence in danger by their statements.

10. The same survey is an input to a central indicator of well-being, not about being victimized, but about feeling safe around home. The number of people who consider that there is no danger to walking alone in their area of residence, as a proportion of the total population amounts to 89.4% of 14 years and over in 2015 in France (indicator 16.1.4). Note that with these types of questions, where there is a consensus in the work on the measurement of insecurity, we leave the comfort of the usual "factual" measures in public statistics to enter the more unusual subjective questions.

11. Lastly, the "Living and safety environment" survey provides information on an indicator of trust in the effectiveness or usefulness of institutions, namely the "proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported this to the competent authorities or resorted to other officially recognized dispute settlement mechanisms ". In France, only 19% of people aged 15 and over who declared themselves victims, informed the security forces.

12. As it exists, the French survey of victimization thus makes it possible to answer some of the indicators of goal 16, but in total only 7 statistical indicators are currently produced at the national level by France in this field. They are gathered on a dedicated area of the INSEE website[3]. It should be noted that, as far as the figures from the victimization surveys are concerned, it is not possible to obtain a new indicator every year: This is because the victimization rates are, fortunately, quite low, and despite the large size of the annual survey (around 16,000 respondents), it is not possible to establish reliable indicators each year, and the information collected during several collections should be aggregated to establish the indicators. This illustrates the high cost of producing indicators in the area of victimization, an area in which there is no administrative data.

[2] For a presentation of the survey, please see:
https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/s1278#consulter, and for detailed results:
https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Interstats/L-enquete-Cadre-de-vie-et-securite-CVS/Rapport-d-enquete-cadre-de-vie-et-securite-2017

[3] https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2654964

13. In part to improve its responses to the SDGs, but also to respond to a growing national social demand, the leaders of the national victimization survey decided to develop the questionnaire in two directions from 2018: discriminatory behaviour and corruption.

14. Regarding discriminatory behaviour, indicator 16.b.1 reads as follows: "Proportion of the population who reported having personally experienced discrimination or harassment in the preceding 12 months for reasons prohibited by international law on human rights". It is therefore a rather broad conception of discriminatory behaviour, which goes beyond the strict discriminations understood as the illegal denial of a right.

15. So far, the investigation has been able to identify discriminatory grounds relating to race, origin, gender or sexual orientation, for example, only for persons who have declared themselves victims of violence, threats or insults. To go further, drawing inspiration from surveys already conducted on the subject of discrimination and after discussion with specialists in the field[4], the designers of the survey propose a new module on discrimination and offensive attitudes.

16. This new module of the questionnaire begins as follows:

"We are now going to talk about the behaviours that you may have experienced because of, for example, your skin colour, your religion, your sexual orientation, your age, or being a man or a woman. It could be:

- Violence, threats or insults;
- Discrimination, that is to say, adverse treatment such as refusal to grant you a job, housing, a loan or any other good or service. For example, a person with a name of foreign origin who does not receive a response when applying for a job or a black-skinned person who is told that an apartment is already rented when that is not true, or someone who is denied credit because they come from a poor neighborhood.
- It can also be offensive or hurtful attitudes or remarks, for example, statements like "Women do not understand mechanics" or "All blacks have a sense of rhythm" or embarrassing questions: "Which country do you come from?" or ""Is it true that you are gay / lesbian?", it can also be an attitude of rejection or avoidance, such as a refusal to shake hands, or to get in an elevator with you, or crossing to the other side of the road. These behaviors may occur at the workplace or school, at the entrance to a nightclub, at a police check or elsewhere.

17. Following the questions that allow people to report if they have been victims in the two years preceding the survey, for those who respond positively, there are some questions about the nature of the discriminatory behaviour, the cause of this behaviour as well as the unfolding and the circumstances of the facts.

18. The collection phase of this revised survey is underway: we hope for the first results by the end of this year. Because of its innovative nature, adjustments may be necessary before a satisfactory measure of the phenomenon can be achieved.

19. The second subject, entirely new to French public statistics, is that of corruption. Here again, we chose the tool of the national survey of victimization, to try to inform indicator 16.5.1: Proportion of people having had, at least once, dealings with a public official to whom they gave a bribe, or who asked for a bribe in the previous 12 months. After consulting specialists in the field, and observing foreign experiences, or those of

[4] In particular the surveys carried out by Insee "Trajectories and origins" of 2008 (https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/s1276) et "life histories" of 2003 https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/s1246#consulter)

specialized NGOs, we designed a specific module of the survey "Framework of Life and Security" which begins:

"Sometimes people are asked for bribes, or gifts, to get a service, a place in a nursery, social housing, an administrative document, an authorization, a permit, a medical appointment, etc. In the last few years, in the course of your personal and private business, or in the course of your work, has anyone asked for or expected from you the payment of a bribe or a gift to provide their products or services?"

20. As in the previous topic, the difficulty is to make the interviewee understand what we want to talk about. This is all the more important here because a large majority of respondents never knew this phenomenon, or at least never interpreted it as such. We avoided using the word "corruption" in the title or even in the text of the question, as it might be misunderstood or cause rejection or misunderstanding.

21. After this "filter" question, there follows a small series of questions aimed at identifying the administrative or economic domain concerned.

22. As with discriminatory behaviour, we will have to wait until the end of 2018 to find out whether our questioning has worked well, and perhaps to draw the first quantitative information that can be used.

23. However, we can have an idea from the results of the survey carried out, according to a very similar method, by our Italian colleagues of ISTAT in 2015-2016. According to this survey, the share of Italian households facing "requests for money, favours, gifts or other in exchange for services or facilitating transactions" during the last year is 1.2%. Measured over a period of 3 years, it rises to 2.7%, and rises to 7.9% over the course of life. The sectors most affected by these corrupt behaviours are job search, then justice, social services and health[5].

24. Despite these planned changes, certain sustainable development indicators for Goal 16 will still not be provided by France in the coming years, for various reasons. This situation is not abnormal or unique to France. Moreover, among the indicators for which French official statistics have no solution yet, several are still classified in "Tier III" and are still the subject of conceptual discussions, especially in the Praia Group on the measure of governance, and the majority are in "Tier II", meaning that the way in which information is collected is problematic for a large number of countries[6].

25. Sometimes, there is no internationally recognized operational definition yet. This is the case of psychological violence, mentioned in indicators 16.1.3 and 16.2.1[7]. Some surveys have measured, through questions about "typical situations", psychological violence within the couple (e.g. "Did your spouse demand to know with whom and where you were?" "Did he devalue what you were doing? "), or in labour relations (" ... have you had repeated and unjustified criticisms of your work, have you been belittled or humiliated ...", "in your work, have you been kept out of the way, prevented from communicating with others?")[8]. Measurements are therefore possible, and have been studied and interpreted, but

[5] See: https://www.istat.it/en/archive/204383

[6] The number of statistical indicators for SDG 16 is particularly high (23), reflecting the complexity of international discussions in this domain. A notable reference on this subject is: Jean-Pierre Cling, Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud, 2018. "SDG16 on Governance and its measurement: Africa in the Lead", Document de travail DIAL N°2018-02, 20 pages.

[7] Although these two indicators are classified in Tier II, it is explicitly stated in the metadata on https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/: "There is still no consensus at the international level on the precise definition of the concept of psychological violence and there is as yet no generally well-established methodology for measuring psychological violence."

[8] "Violence and gender relations: contexts and consequences of violence against women and men" survey, National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED), 2015, https://virage.site.ined.fr/fr/

in the absence of a uniform international framework, the construction of reliable and comparable indicators over time and between countries is currently impossible.

26. Most often, it is questions of statistical technique that impact on the correct information for the indicators. These problems are very varied according to the indicators.

27. The indicator of violence against children 13.2.1 "Proportion of children aged 1 to 17 who were subjected to corporal punishment or psychological assault by a caregiver in the previous month" raises a problem of collection technique: for legal reasons, it is difficult to interview a sample of children without the consent of their parents, especially on such a subject. The questioning of parents introduces, of course, an important response bias, since they are most often the perpetrators of its violence, and the administrative data will systematically underestimate the extent of the phenomenon. Only a retrospective survey of very young adults could make it possible to approach the target, similar to what is proposed in indicator 16.2.3 "Proportion of young women and men aged 18 to 29 who have been victims of violence before the age of 18".

28. The indicator of corporate corruption 16.5.2 "Proportion of companies that have had at least once to deal with a public official to whom they have paid a bribe or who has asked them for a bribe in the previous 12 months" also poses a problem of sampling frame for a possible investigation: who to investigate within the company? First, there is a risk that economic leaders may want to hide or minimize an event that may have been deemed necessary for the life of their business. Secondly, passive bribery may affect several people in the company, but the information does not reach the one who, most often, answers the statistical questionnaires for the company.

29. On the suggestion of specialists in economic crime, France is experimenting from 2018 on the following approach, as part of its household survey: not only are people asked if they have been asked for a bribe in the household, their private or family life, but they are also asked if they have been victims of this form of corruption in their professional lives. Thus, we will try to measure a practice relating to the life of companies through a household survey. Following the same logic, we also ask people about the situations where, as part of their work, they were offered a bribe, for example to obtain a contract or an order. We thus complete the testimonies of passive corruption with testimonies of active corruption.

30. In the absence of an exact answer to the question of the proportion of companies concerned, we will therefore have an indication of the proportion of active persons who have been exposed to corrupt practices, provided that the investigative mechanism has worked well.

31. We will pass quickly to subjects for which, at the moment, we do not see any technical solutions, whether through specific surveys, the use of administrative sources or through integration of sources: the quantification of illicit international financial resources flows, the traceability of firearms or the number of victims of human trafficking. In these three fields, we are far, at the national as well as international levels, from having reliable tools to allow comparable figures between countries and from which we could construct time series[9].

32. Before concluding, let us consider another type of indicator for the moment that is beyond the reach of French public statistics. These are the indicators of satisfaction with the institutions: "Proportion of the population whose last experience with public services has been satisfactory" (SDG 16.6.2) and "Proportion of the population that believes that decision-making is open and responsive" (SDG 16.7.2). These two indicators both seem, at first glance, to be technically simple to construct, based on a general population survey.

[9] Two of these indicators are still officially classified in "Tier III", and the third in "Tier II".

They pose even fewer problems of survey technique than questions, for example, about sexual violence, and do not necessarily require high sample sizes. Their common point is to ask citizens for a general opinion on public action, which is not in the tradition of French official statistics surveys.

33. For a long time subjective questions of opinion, have been considered unreliable, and have been banned from official statistics. Now, however, opinions on economic prospects are used as cyclical barometers, the users of certain public services are questioned on the quality of the reception or the treatment of their requests. Following the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report on the "measurement of economic performance and social progress" submitted in September 2009, several statistical operations have been enriched by measurement tools on the overall well-being of individuals or satisfaction associated with certain activities[10].

34. On the other hand, probably because they are in themselves politically sensitive public policy evaluation indicators, global issues of satisfaction, trust or effectiveness of institutions are almost never included in the questionnaires of public statistics, in France but also in most European NSIs.

35. Some private or public research or research institutions do not share this reluctance. The OECD, in particular, has extensively explored this area in its study "How's Life? 2017 Measuring Well-being"[11]. We learn in particular, from a perspective very close to SDG 16.7.2, that in France, only 10% of the population feels they have a say in what the government does, which is well below the OECD average (33%)[12]. However, the OECD in this report highlights the difficulty in measuring governance, because of its multidimensional nature, an absence for now of international consensus on the conceptual scope of statistics of governance but also of a methodology still insufficiently robust and tested. This is particularly the case with regard to measuring confidence in institutions, whereas the measure of trust between individuals, based on household surveys, appears to be more consensual and tested.

36. Eurostat experimented in 2013 with the addition of a module of questions on subjective well-being in the SILC survey. This module included 4 questions on trust: one on trust in others and 3 on confidence in institutions (on a scale from 0 to 10 indicate your satisfaction regarding: how much trust do you have in political institutions and political and public leaders, how much trust do you have in justice and how much trust do you have in the police). The results of this experimental modu'e did not convince the NSIs, especially for measuring confidence in institutions and more specifically confidence in the political system. Thus, trust in politicians appeared very dependent on the political cycle which is obviously not the same across countries, making it difficult to interpret the results. In the end, when it came to deciding whether to repeat these questions about confidence in the SILC module in 2018, the task force in charge of the design of the module preferred not to do so. An important point to be further developed on these topics, based on sound empirical analysis supported by field survey results, is the international comparability of the statistics produced as well as the comparability over time of measurements for the same country.

37. This reluctance of national authorities is not shared worldwide, as, for example, several African countries have entrusted their national statistical institutes with the responsibility of conducting surveys of their governance, the questionnaires for which were

[10] See notably the following works from Insee:
https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1373892?sommaire=1373905&q=satisfaction and
https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1280974

[11] http://www.oecd.org/statistics/how-s-life-23089679.htm

[12] This information was collected in the International Adult Use of Information Survey (PIAAC):
https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/s1257

designed by researchers from the Institute for Research for Development (IRD) and UMR DIAL (Development, Institutions and Globalization) of the University of Paris-Dauphine. These survey modules collect information on victimization, feelings of insecurity, but also testimonials about corruption, the quality of relations with the authorities and confidence in the authorities. The work so far has demonstrated not only technical feasibility but also relevance and ability to highlight the governance qualities of the countries concerned[13].

38. In addition to technical difficulties, it is also the strategic orientations of the French public statistics that lead to these indicators not being provided. In particular, public statisticians consider that a relevant and effective public policy evaluation can only be conducted in agreement, and in coordination, with those responsible for this policy. This requirement - which is not incompatible with the scientific independence and the transparency of the approach - does not prove to be incompatible with the conduct of the sectoral work, aiming to evaluate a specific policy or in a particular field of public action, but so far it has not allowed the establishment of a system of global assessment of institutions. This state of affairs may evolve in the coming years. In particular, the CNIS working group, a forum for consultation between producers and users of official statistics, tasked since the summer of 2017 with selecting the relevant indicators reflecting France's efforts to achieve the targets associated with the SDGs, will be able to issue recommendations to develop the current statistical system associated with Goal 16.

II. Conclusion

39. In conclusion, French public statistics are not entirely destitute in the new field of statistics on peace, justice and effective institutions, but it will have to enrich its tools, and possibly to evolve some of its strategic axes, to increase the production of indicators in this area. These limits are not unique to France, and the enrichment of French data will also depend on the ongoing multilateral discussions on the concepts and methods that remain to be defined for certain indicators.

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[13] Razafindrakoto, M. and Roubaud, F.(2018) "Responding to the SDG16 Measurement Challenge: The Governance, Peace and Security Survey Modules in Africa", Global Policy (2018) University of Durham and John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda
Measuring what matters - broadening official statistics:
Session 2: How to react swiftly

Measuring what matters: Remaining relevant in the changing United States economy

Note by United States Bureau of Economic Analysis

Summary

The document provides an overview of how the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is confronting the challenge of providing timely, relevant and comprehensive data in the conditions of changing economy. BEA uses five innovative mechanisms for this purpose: expanding the use of satellite accounts, leveraging flexible revision periods, strengthening partnerships with source data agencies, better harnessing big data, and developing a multi-disciplinary staff. Successful deployment of these strategies will allow to position agencies to readily anticipate and respond to rapidly changing economic tides in ways that meet the growing expectations of customers.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics", Session 2 "How to react swiftly" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. Perhaps one of the most daunting challenges facing statistical agencies around the globe is keeping their statistics up-to-date in the sea of change that is the modern economy. Emerging technologies, the growing importance of global supply chains, and the expanding complexity of financial relationships continue to introduce significant measurement challenges into the field of economic accounting. As the producer of some of the United States' most closely watched and influential economic indicators, the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) must confront this issue head-on.

2. BEA has identified five key areas that statistical agencies can focus on to help them stay relevant: (1) expand the use of alternative mechanisms, such as "satellite accounts"; (2) leverage flexible revision periods; (3) strengthen partnerships with source data agencies; (4) better harness "big data" and other non-traditional data sources; and (5) develop a dynamic, multi-disciplinary staff.

II. Expand the use of satellite accounts

3. To give statistical agencies the edge in responding to current global trends, they should consider low-cost ways to offer new datasets without changing official economic measures. BEA has a long, successful history of using "satellite accounts" to introduce supplemental data products. Over the years, BEA has constructed satellite accounts highlighting key sectors, such as arts and culture, travel and tourism, research and development, and health care. Satellite accounts serve two main purposes: (1) they provide alternative economic perspectives that are of keen interest to the user community by re-packaging existing data to evaluate a specific aspect or sector of the economy, and (2) they fuel the expansion and development of economic accounts by providing a framework for testing experimental measures without the risk of disrupting the core statistics.

A. Evaluate a specific aspect or sector of the economy

4. BEA typically constructs satellite accounts using rich detail from BEA's input-output (I-O) accounts, which provide an in-depth look at the relationships among industries, including each industry's contribution to GDP. Under this approach, satellite accounts essentially rearrange I-O detail and complement it with other data sources to highlight a certain sector or type of activity. BEA's Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts (TTSAs) provide an excellent example of the content, construction, and use of satellite accounts.

- Content: TTSAs present a detailed picture of travel and tourism activity and its role in the U.S. economy. The accounts feature estimates of spending by tourists on 24 types of goods and services, including data on food services and drinking places, domestic and international air passenger transportation services, and automotive rentals. The accounts also present estimates of the income, output, and employment generated by travel and tourism-related industries;
- Construction: TTSAs are created using detail from the I-O accounts, augmented with data from other BEA accounts, from other government agencies, and from a private vendor of tourism statistics. The accounts comply with the standards set forth by the United Nations World Tourism Organization and its *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics;*
- Use: TTSA data are regularly used by industry analysts, academic researchers, and U.S. government agencies (including Congressional offices) to analyze the

effects of tourism on the U.S. economy. Specifically, the TTSAs can be used to determine the expenditures of tourists and compare travel and tourism industries to other industries.

B. Test experimental measures

5. Satellite accounts also serve as a laboratory for experimenting and developing concepts that are not ready for implementation as official measures. At BEA, this approach has facilitated the introduction of new statistics much more quickly than relying on changes to the core set of accounts. For example, in the case of BEA's Health Care Satellite Account, health care spending is presented by disease rather than by type of product. This provides policymakers with a new view of spending that highlights the diseases that drive spending growth, and whether that growth is the result of an increase in the number of cases or the result of an increase in cost. Essentially, this satellite account provides a different perspective on health care spending that can help policymakers, but at the same time, does not disrupt the official GDP statistics.

6. Looking to the future, BEA will continue to expand its use of satellite accounts as a means of introducing statistics outside of its core datasets. BEA currently has three new satellite accounts—highlighting outdoor recreation, the digital economy, and ocean-related activity—in various stages of development.

- Outdoor recreation: In early 2018, BEA released prototype statistics measuring the economic effects of outdoor recreation—activities like boating, RVing, and snowboarding—across the U.S. economy. BEA will continue to gather feedback from businesses, industry groups, and other interested members of the public to help finalize definitions, data sources, and methods. A full set of detailed national statistics is expected to be released in the fall of 2018;
- Digital economy: In the spring of 2018, BEA released, for the first time, preliminary statistics on the size and growth of the digital economy. This marked a crucial step in a larger project aimed at better capturing the effects of fast-changing technologies on the U.S. economy and on global supply chains. BEA will build on these efforts to advance research on digital goods and services, the sharing economy, and free digital content;
- Ocean-related activity: BEA is in the initial stages of developing a satellite account for ocean-related economic activity. First steps include establishing a preliminary definition of ocean-related goods and services and exploring data sources and methods. From there, BEA will prepare national-level prototype statistics and gather public feedback by the fall of 2018.

7. Satellite accounts allow statistical agencies to spotlight specific sectors of the economy and test experimental measures without altering official economic statistics. This is an effective mechanism for statistical agencies looking to balance the competing demands of relevance, timeliness, and data integrity.

III. Leverage flexible revision periods

8. Statistical agencies' rigid revision processes have been a barrier for keeping up with continuous changes in the economy. Until recently, BEA regularly updated data and methods for recent years only; much more rarely would BEA revise longer time spans to introduce major changes in definitions, classifications, and methods. In 2010, BEA adopted a new, flexible approach to managing revisions that accelerated improvements to BEA's

accounts by expanding the periods subject to revision. "Flexible" annual revisions have benefited BEA and its customers in several ways—data users have a more accurate and up-to-date set of accounts with fewer changes reserved for infrequent, major revisions, and BEA is able to manage changes to its accounts better and allocate its resources more efficiently.

9. Historically, there have been two tracks for yearly revisions to BEA's accounts—comprehensive updates and annual updates. Comprehensive updates are usually conducted at 5-year intervals that correspond with the release of information from the quinquennial U.S. economic census. BEA has often introduced major changes to the accounts in comprehensive updates because these improvements tend to require revisions to many years or to multiple components within the accounts.

10. In contrast, BEA's annual updates were designed to revise the accounts with source data for recent periods, for example, incorporating information on domestic production, sales, and inventories from U.S. Census Bureau surveys and information from foreign trade reports. BEA has also used annual updates to introduce improvements to methods that primarily affected these recent periods. By convention, annual updates were limited to the 3 most recent years. As a result, some improvements that would have also significantly affected earlier periods were reserved for comprehensive updates to preserve time-series consistency.

11. About a decade ago, BEA recognized that its revision cycles had become out-of-sync with the realities of the modern economy. Instead, a more flexible approach to introducing major changes was taken. Flexible annual updates allow some of the complex and cross-cutting improvements, once introduced only every 5 years, to be incorporated into the accounts on a flow basis, benefiting customers and BEA alike.

A. Customer benefits

12. Flexible annual updates provide users of BEA's statistics with better information earlier. In addition, users benefit from having fewer cross-cutting improvements to absorb when trying to understand how and why the long-term picture of the economy has changed during comprehensive updates.

B. Agency benefits

13. Flexible revisions also strengthen BEA's review of many account improvements by removing them from peak production periods leading up to comprehensive updates when the demands on staff are greatest. In addition, flexible annual updates increase the frequency and scope of staff interactions across BEA's program areas. Interactions among staff from different work areas yield insights that lead to improvements to the accounts. With flexible annual revisions, this contact is more continuous than periodic, increasing the efficiency with which BEA produces and improves its economic measures—an especially important characteristic in a tight budget climate.

14. Statistical agencies' revision cycles should mirror the speed of change in today's economy. By being more flexible and allowing for more changes, more regularly, agencies can ensure that their data products paint an accurate, fully nuanced picture of the global economy.

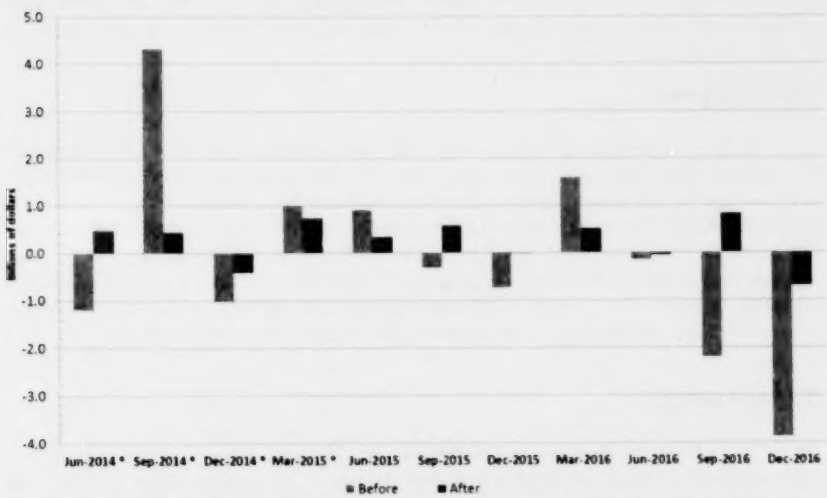
IV. Strengthen partnerships with source data agencies

15. As pressures for timelier, more detailed statistics mount, statistical agencies should pool resources to improve and expand their data products. This is especially true in decentralized statistical systems, as in the United States. BEA has a rich history of coordinating with other agencies to enhance data quality and achieve the earlier incorporation of vital information into principal economic indicators. BEA's recent work with the U.S. Census Bureau to accelerate the publication of source data for the initial GDP estimates highlights the importance of collaboration between statistical agencies.

16. Over the last several years, BEA and the Census Bureau have joined forces to release several key GDP inputs sooner, including data on business inventories, international trade in goods, and services spending. Previously, these data were not available in time for the preliminary GDP readings, and BEA made assumptions for the missing information. As a result of these efforts, BEA and the Census Bureau have been able to refine some of their most influential measures and reduce revisions to the early GDP statistics.

Chart 1

Exports of goods: Comparison of revisions before and after the incorporation of the U.S. Census Bureau Advance Report on U.S. Trade in Goods



*Simulated results; incorporation of the Census Bureau Advance Report on U.S. Trade in Goods began with

17. The introduction of the Census Bureau Advance Report on U.S. Trade in Goods provides a window into the effects of recent data improvement actions. In 2015, BEA collaborated with the Census Bureau to release international trade in goods data in time for BEA's first reads on quarterly GDP. BEA is now able to incorporate 3 months of Census Bureau data at the time of the initial estimates rather than using 2 months of source data and an assumption for the third month. Chart 1 compares revisions to BEA's estimates of exports of goods before and after the incorporation of data from the advance report. The timelier publication of Census Bureau data has led to notable improvements in BEA's export and import statistics and has reduced revisions to quarterly GDP by about $6 billion, on average, or 0.1 to 0.2 percentage point in growth-rate terms.

18. Moving forward, BEA will continue to partner with other U.S. statistical agencies to enrich the source data underpinning its economic accounts. For instance, as the next step in their data acceleration program, BEA and the Census Bureau are working to publish construction spending statistics earlier, improving BEA's estimates of investment in structures. Joint initiatives such as this allow agencies to share resources, best practices, and technical knowledge and pave the way for important advancements in the field of economic statistics.

V. Harness alternative data sources—including "big data"

19. Despite the falling response rates on government surveys and continued constraints on government resources, business executives, government officials, academic researchers, and consumers are demanding larger amounts of timely data to guide their economic decisions. To meet these demands, statistical agencies should explore ways to leverage alternative data sources, including "big data", keeping a close eye on the challenges associated with the use of these datasets.

20. Big data already feature prominently among BEA's sources and methods—the agency uses auto registrations to calculate motor vehicle output, retail store point-of-sale scanner data to estimate select components of consumer spending, and tax records to compute corporate profits. BEA's current efforts with big data fall into three main categories: (1) fill data gaps, (2) expand detail, and (3) employ "passive" data collection.

A. Fill data gaps

21. BEA is investigating ways to apply big data to improve the early GDP estimates. For example, BEA has begun researching how to better measure spending on products and services for which timely source data are lacking—for example, using commercial insurance claims data to estimate consumer spending on health care services that accounts for about 18 percent of gross domestic product. BEA is also expanding its use of retail scanner data to track consumer spending in the very dynamic area of digital goods and services—products like smartphones, video games, contract ride services (for example, Uber), and video and audio streaming services (for example, Hulu and Pandora).

B. Expand detail

22. BEA is also exploring how big data can provide more comprehensive information, finer geographic detail, and higher frequency statistics. For instance, BEA and the U.S. Census Bureau have initiated a project using zip code information from credit and debit card transactions to produce estimates of consumer spending by county and metropolitan area—geographic levels of detail that customers demand but that are not currently available or achievable through traditional survey methods. In addition, BEA is evaluating housing transactions and characteristics data from Zillow to improve housing measures within BEA's national and regional statistics.

C. Employ passive data collection

23. BEA and its statistical agency partners are examining applications for passive data collection—that is, automatically extracting data from a company's system and transmitting those data for compilation and analysis. For BEA's surveys of international trade, this would reduce respondent burden and increase response rates, improving the timeliness and

accuracy of BEA's statistics. The U.S. Census Bureau has also begun work in this area, collaborating with big data providers to gather information that would otherwise be collected through surveys. In an initial pilot project, the Census Bureau is testing the use of retail scanner data to fill in missing survey data, with the goal of enhancing monthly and annual retail trade surveys and the economic census.

24. While the overall benefits of using big data appear to outweigh the costs, significant obstacles associated with these data remain. Two of these obstacles are achieving sustainability and overcoming resource constraints.

D. Sustainability

25. The effectiveness of any statistical agency is inexorably tied to its ability to provide timely, meaningful information to customers in as transparent a way as possible. It is not enough to harness big data for one-time studies, no matter how groundbreaking they may be. Instead, these alternative data sources must be sustainable in a way that supports the ongoing production of statistics. There are several considerations under the umbrella of sustainability. First, to prepare reliable time series, statistical agencies must have access to high-quality data for long time spans that are based on consistent classifications and methods and that can be calibrated to fit into existing statistical frameworks. In addition, the data must be cost-effective, and any costs must be predictable over time. Finally, there must be incentives for both the data providers and the statistical agencies, hinging on considerations like cost structures, knowledge sharing, and publicity.

E. Resource constraints

26. Statistical agencies must make significant financial and human capital investments to understand, manipulate, and use big data sources. For example, the insurance claims data that underlie the disease-based price indexes of BEA's Health Care Satellite Account took about 10 years to develop. While it is not possible or practical to repeat this practice with every big data project, some level of investment will always be required. Purchasing data from third-party providers can help reduce some of the costs associated with big data. These vendors can help tremendously with processing big data into manageable chunks (for example, data scrubbing, editing, and aggregation) and can greatly diminish the amount of in-house investment required to handle these enormous datasets.

27. While there are hurdles to overcome, alternative data sources, like big data, hold much promise for revolutionizing the way statistical agencies collect, compile, review, and publish information. If government statisticians can forge long-term relationships with data providers and statistical agencies can invest the right level of resources in these efforts, big data may well be the key to ensuring the continuing quality, integrity, and relevance of some of the world's most vital economic statistics.

VI. Develop a dynamic, multidisciplinary staff

28. To tackle the unique challenges of measuring today's economy, statistical agencies should cultivate a staff with strong data science skills, in addition to more traditional skills in economics and statistics. This means recruiting the specific talent and abilities needed to address emerging data issues, training staff in a diverse range of topics—from foundational economic theories and statistical approaches to pioneering data management and analytics techniques, and bolstering employee engagement to retain agencies' internal knowledge bases.

A. Attract talent

29. Statistical agencies should cast a wide net to recruit employees with the right mix of skills, building cadres of agile, innovative analysts eager not only to maintain but also to improve the agencies' data products. At BEA, the days of hiring pure economists or pure statisticians, especially for research positions, are largely gone. BEA has found that employees with varied backgrounds naturally approach problems from multiple angles, resulting in novel solutions to some of the most pressing issues confronting economic measurement today.

B. Develop staff

30. Statistical agencies should strive to provide a plethora of opportunities for staff to encounter and interact with data science techniques as well as more traditional theories and methods. This means more cross-training of employees and more on-the-job exploration of data science, alongside conventional methods. BEA recently hired a Chief Innovation Officer not only to employ cutting-edge tools but also to teach them to staff. As BEA builds a community of practice around data science, these skills will begin to guide agency-wide innovation, ultimately transforming the development of new and enhanced statistical products.

C. Engage employees

31. Many of BEA's new hires enter the agency with training and experience in data science and visualization; however, it is often difficult to keep these staff engaged. The challenge is to find better ways to take advantage of these skill sets—there needs to be more flexibility about traditional divisions within statistical agencies (for example, an economist may assist communications staff with data visualization). As agencies tear down these organizational silos, they will be better equipped to fully make use of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their employees.

32. Statistical agencies should consider how to build their human capital capacities by attracting, developing, and engaging staff from diverse backgrounds. Agencies should empower employees with skills in both data science and more traditional statistical methods and economic analysis to nimbly blaze the trail in modernizing the world's economic accounts.

VII. Conclusion

33. The international statistical community is charged with the arduous task of providing timely, relevant, and comprehensive economic data. BEA recognizes five innovative mechanisms for confronting this challenge: expanding the use of satellite accounts, leveraging flexible revision periods, strengthening partnerships with source data agencies, better harnessing big data, and developing a multi-disciplinary staff. Successful deployment of these strategies will go a long way in positioning agencies to readily anticipate and respond to rapidly changing economic tides in ways that meet the growing expectations of their customers.

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Conference of European Statisticians
Sixty-sixth plenary session
Geneva, 18–20 June 2018
Item 3 of the provisional agenda
Measuring what matters - broadening official statistics:
Session 1: Emerging topics

Measurement of subjectivity in social statistics

Note by Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Summary

The document presents a case of broadening official statistics to subjective measurements based on an example of measuring subjective well-being (happiness). In measuring subjectivity in official statistics, it is essential to cooperate with sociologists and psychologists, communicate the subjective measures in connection with objective measures, take into account the cultural bias (especially when comparing results internationally), and describe how the data were obtained.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Measuring what matters - broadening official statistics", Session 1: "Emerging topics" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. Statistics are nowadays opening up to new sources and methods but also to new themes. It is expected that this will result in some positive outcomes.

2. But how is this accepted by the social environment? What are the impacts and requirements when including a new topic in statistics? We will try to answer these questions with an example of measuring subjective well-being (in particular happiness), which is now becoming more and more an integral part of measuring the quality of life in official statistics. At the same time, there are many conceptual and practical problems with measuring and using this theme.

3. Inclusion of the measuring the quality of life in statistical production was a reaction of official statistics to reservations about using gross domestic product as an indicator of subjective well-being of individuals. The very concept of quality of life has been imported into statistics from other scientific disciplines, mainly from sociology and psychology. The concept takes on a statistical character because statistical sample surveys are used as a preferred data source, the indicators meet the statistical quality and production requirements and, last but not least, it is analysed using statistical methods.

II. Measuring subjective well-being

4. The main source of data for the calculation of indicators for measuring the subjective quality of life is the harmonized European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC).

5. The well-being module was included in EU SILC in 2013 on the basis of the practice of annual inclusion of the so-called specific (secondary) variables that extend the picture about poverty and social exclusion. For the first time EU SILC included variables that were not focused on the main objective of the survey, which is to provide data on income inequality, poverty and social exclusion. The new module was to fill gaps in the system of proposed quality of life indicators for the European Statistical System.

6. The module contained in total 22 variables to measure mental well-being (feelings of nervousness, depression or frustration, feelings of peace and serenity) and measurement of the feeling of happiness. This is associated with the concepts of hedonistic and eudemonic well-being[1].

7. Subjective well-being was also measured by overall life satisfaction and the meaning of life. Overall life satisfaction was understood as the assessment of the respondent's life as a whole, taking into account his or her opinion/feeling of satisfaction with his or her life, i.e. how an individual perceives himself/herself at a certain time. The intention was not to obtain information about the current emotional state of the respondent, but about the judgment based on the reflection of himself/herself. Meaning of life was understood in terms of life goals and values.

8. When measuring the overall satisfaction according to the results of the frequency distribution of particular scale points, the residents of Slovakia are satisfied rather than dissatisfied and rated at 7.0 on a scale of 0 to 10, with the median value of 7 and the mode value[2] of 8. It is, however, in contrast with the international position of Slovakia in deprivation measuring, where the Slovaks present themselves negatively more often than

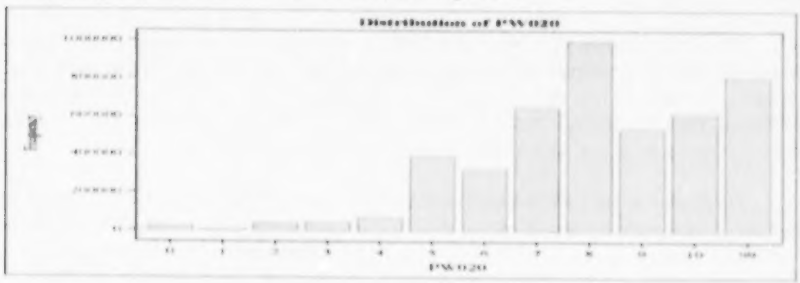
[1] Hedonistic well-being emphasizes primary happiness; eudemonic well-being focuses on the meaningful life of an individual in relation to social values and his self-realization.

[2] The mean and median are measured from weighted data, mode from unweighted data.

other countries (i.e. the most dejected). According to the OECD Better Life Index (2017), the overall satisfaction with life in Slovakia is at the level of 6.1 measured on a scale of 0 to 10 and has increased over the last decade.

Chart 1

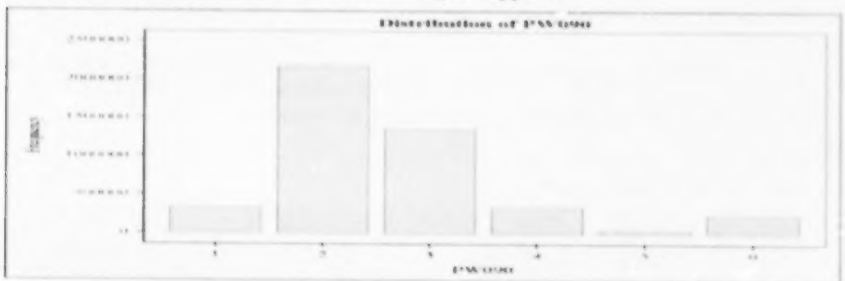
Frequency distribution of variable - the meaning of life



9. The assessment of the meaning of life on the same scale from 0 to 10 reaches similar values (the average is 7.5) while the value of the median and the mode is 8. A relatively high shares of respondents answered "I do not know" (99).

Chart 2

Frequency distribution of the variable - feeling of happiness



10. In the World Happiness index (World Happiness Report 2017), Slovakia ranked 40th. The feeling of happiness has increased considerably compared to 2006-2007. The frequency distribution of the variable – 'feeling of happiness' measured in EU SILC is presented in chart 2.

11. Nolan and Lang (2009) identified the following aspects of statistical thinking: problem decomposition and identifying key components, summarizing and formulating different strategies, connecting the original problem with the statistical framework, selecting and applying methods, resolving constraints, and communicating the findings. In the measuring subjectivity, the communication of the findings proves to be a key component. The communication should focus on explaining the concepts used, possible differences in the results when the various measurements are used, and on the development trends.

12. If trends are the same or similar, the explanation seems to be easier. But if the trends differ, the user may question the source of the data, and with subjective measurements, the whole concept as well. If the concept of measuring happiness is not clearly explained, the public may understand it differently from the statistical measures.

13. It is important to convey the trends. Therefore measurement of subjectivity in statistical production should be done regularly, not only once, and at regular intervals. This is the only way to confirm or refute claims, for example, on the more frequent use of the centre of the scale of subjective measurements conducted in Central Europe. When subjective indicators are measured systematically, this allows to analyse the influence, for example, of socio-political events and their impact on the measurement results.

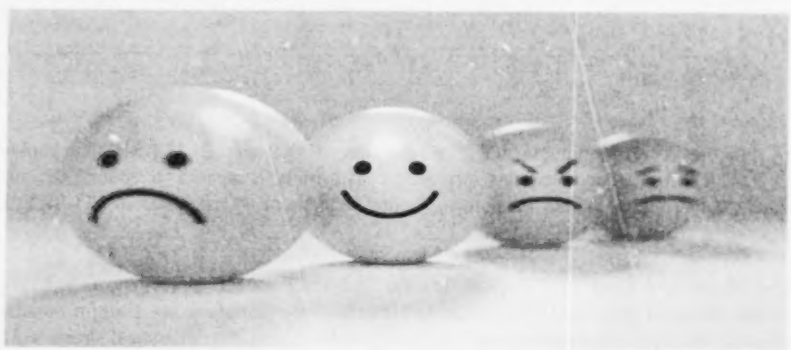
14. The objectification of subjective indicators seems to be a key action. The indicators should be presented as part of a comprehensive view, not just the figures in a table. Likewise, subjective indicators should always be presented in connection with objective indicators. The respective analysis should include not only statistics but also the explanation of why it is in such a way.

15. Discussion about what scientists want and statisticians need to know about the issues took place in several forums in Slovakia. The most event was the conference "Quality of Life in the Context of Poverty" in December 2017 where statistical data were compared with a psychological approach to measuring subjective well-being. Existing problems of validity and interpretation of data (especially if they are the result of subjective measurements) place great importance on analysis and evaluation of results. This requires cooperation with experts from other areas who measure the quality of life, the subjective aspects of quality of life or subjective well-being.

16. It is necessary to realize and correctly inform users that discrepancies with other sources can help to identify problems, especially in complicated social reality.

17. The users are not always experts. This shows the need to use everyday language and modern tools of visualization that help users better understand the data. People like to find other people in data and identify themselves with other people.

Picture 1
Who represents your country?



III. Conclusion

18. In conclusion we can say that when measuring new phenomena, for example, subjectivity, for the statistical practice the following points are essential:

(a) *Partnership* – for better capturing national specificities, it is needed to cooperate with sociologists and psychologists as early as possible in the phase of preparing the concept as well as the measurement.

(b) Objectification of subjective measurements –communicate and present the results in connection with objective measurements (e.g. relationship of life satisfaction and public engagement).

(c) Taking into account the cultural bias - especially for surveys to be used for international comparisons, and how it might explain the results achieved.

(d) Survey design - describe the data source in such a way that it is clear not only how the data were obtained but also why they were acquired in that way.

19. Statistics do not inevitably have to measure subjective phenomena, but should participate actively in the development of tools and methods for measuring the new phenomena. That would contribute to the validity of results regardless of who performs the measurement.

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Conference of European Statisticians
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Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Building trust in statistics through communications

Note by the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Summary

When it comes to the production and use of official statistics, trust is paramount. The data produced by national statistical offices provides the basis for critical decisions made by governments, businesses, communities and households. Now more than ever before in its 112-year history, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is using communications to retain and build trust and manage issues effectively. Our facts are not alternative.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 2: "Communication crises - issue and reputation management" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. In today's interconnected world, trust is the glue that binds us together and communications plays a pivotal role in cementing that trust. You cannot buy trust – you have to earn it. However, once you have worked long and hard to earn it, trust is transitory and is easily lost. It takes a lot of effort to rebuild it.

2. According to the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer, there has been a gradual decline in trust in institutions, such as business, government, media and NGOs, over the past five years. In this era of scepticism and cynicism it is important for us all to operate with openness, transparency and accountability.

3. Leaders need to lead, be upfront and out and about, with honesty, authenticity and integrity. The title of the address by David W. Kalisch, Australian Statistician, to the Conference of European Statisticians is: "Building trust in statistics through communications".

II. The ABS and its role

4. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has a trusted role in informing important decisions. The ABS is one of Australia's iconic national institutions, providing reliable economic, population, social and other information for more than 110 years.

5. The ABS is known for its independence, transparency and rigour. Every year, the ABS produces more than 500 statistical releases on Australia's society, its economy, population and environment.

6. These statistics are vital for decision making across government, business, research and not-for-profit sectors. The full range of the ABS's economic statistics guide fiscal, structural and monetary policy decisions. Our population numbers shape infrastructure and planning decisions, affect inter-government financial flows and our electoral redistributions. Our social statistics provide a window on society and how it is changing.

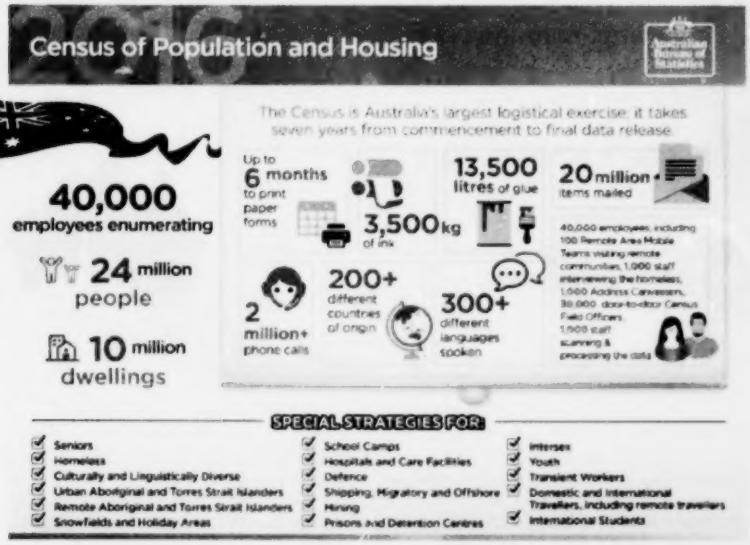
7. The ABS continues to produce these vital statistics in the face of many contemporary challenges. Australia's economy and society is becoming increasingly complex and more difficult to measure. At the same time, the ABS is operating in an increasingly stringent fiscal environment (the organisation has 20 per cent less funding and staffing compared to 10 years ago) and is in the process of replacing its fragile, ageing statistical infrastructure.

8. The combination of today's information age, where opportunities, expectations and technology are all moving at a considerably faster pace than previously, with reduced resources necessitates a more significant change to how the ABS needs to work.

III. 2016 Census

9. The ABS's flagship is the Census, conducted every five years as required under *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. Conducting the Census is always a big challenge. It is a major exercise with planning, development, testing, implementation and delivery spanning at least five years, with a further two years for data processing and statistical releases. The 2016 Census cost around $500 million, involved up to 40,000 field staff and, as with every Census, included complex delivery models for different population groups, such as Indigenous, remote, homeless and elderly.

Figure 1
2016 Census of Population and Housing


Census of Population and Housing
40,000
employees enumerating
24 million
people
10 million
dwellings
The Census is Australia's largest logistical exercise: it takes seven years from commencement to final data release.
Up to 6 months to print paper forms
3,500kg of ink
13,500 litres of glue
20 million+ items mailed
40,000 employees, including 100 Remote Area Mobile Teams visiting remote communities, 1,000 staff interviewing the homeless, 1,000 Address Canvassers, 30,000 door-to-door Census Field Officers, 1,500 staff scanning & processing the data
2 million+ phone calls
200+ different countries of origin
300+ different languages spoken
SPECIAL STRATEGIES FOR:
Seniors
Homeless
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Snowfields and Holiday Areas
School Camps
Hospitals and Care Facilities
Defence
Shipping, Migratory and Offshore
Mining
Prisons and Detention Centres
Intersex
Youth
Transient Workers
Domestic and International Travellers, including remote travellers
International Students

10. The 2016 Census signalled a major change to the way the Census was conducted, with the shift from paper forms to online submissions as the primary collection method. Australia's first "digital first" strategy, which was agreed to in 2012, made it easier and faster for the ABS to process and produce a higher quality data set.

11. It was also more efficient and consistent with public expectations of dealing with government through accessible digital means.

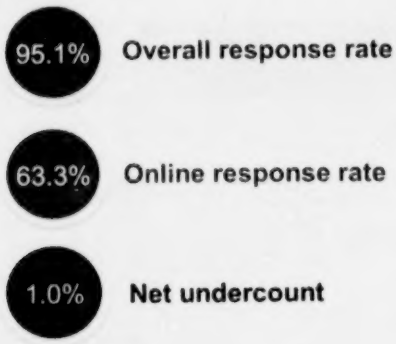
12. Many aspects of the 2016 Census were managed well, however, some key issues were not. The ABS Census website was taken offline as a precaution.

- Three reasons why the website was taken offline – distributed denial of service, IBM hardware failure, monitoring information suggested that data had been transferred out of the ABS without authorisation;
- The next two days were used to ensure the Census system as robust as possible before it is put back up for public to use.

13. This generated all sorts of media headlines and was widely portrayed on social media as "#CensusFail" and headlines of: "Worst Census ever".

14. As the key measures below show, the ABS delivered quality Census data. Even with the on-line data collection system out for nearly two days from 9 August during an eight-week collection period, the 2016 Census achieved an 80 per cent increase in the online response rate compared to 2011.

Figure 2
Census success



15. The 2016 Census did not fail; however, the ABS's reputation took a hit – that is undeniable.

16. If trust is the currency for organisations, it is fair to say that this had sharply depreciated for the ABS. In August 2016, the proportion of people who thought the Census had failed was 47 per cent. Most recent testing put it at about 20 per cent.

17. Data shows the community's attitudes and reactions to the 2016 Census at the height of the media frenzy in the lead-up to Census night and how the tone shifted in the months following the first release of Census information:

Table 1
Social media barometer

Social media attitudes	Feb-August 2016	Post 1st data release June 2017	Post 2nd release, October 2017
Favourable	23.4 per cent	13.2 per cent	73 per cent
Neutral	23 per cent	57.6 per cent	14.5 per cent
Unfavourable	54 per cent	29 per cent	12.5 per cent

18. Further recent testing of the community's trust in the ABS shows that it is back to usual levels with nearly 90 per cent of respondents trust the ABS to deliver high-quality, reliable statistics for Australia.

19. In hindsight there were problems with the ABS's communications strategy for the 2016 Census:

- The organisation underestimated the communications challenge, did not allocate enough money or time to the communications program and communications campaigns, and needed to be more agile to respond to emerging challenges;
- The ABS could have communicated more clearly at an earlier stage with those concerned about privacy issues on why it was collecting and then using names and addresses of respondents to the Census;
- The ABS needed to work with the changing nature of traditional media, which is impacted by technology shifts and compressed time and resources. As an

organisation ABS needed to be better prepared and public communications need to be implemented in minutes and not hours during such a challenging time; and

- In a world of many "experts", who can gain prominence on TV, radio or social media, contrary community claims get as much attention as evidence from official sources. However, in this contemporary environment there are also new communications approaches we can and should use to get perspectives out.

IV. Rebuilding community trust

20. It was critically important for the ABS to rebuild community trust after the events of the 2016 Census and, as one of the lead data integrators for government, to meet community expectations.

21. Trust is like the markets – it takes the stairs up and the elevator down. The ABS was not going to waste a crisis and set about to rebuild public trust and prepare for the conduct of the 2021 Census to implement the lessons learned – many of them the hard way.

22. The lessons include: managing cyber risk more extensively; more extensive risk and issues management and being better prepared when issues are emerging; understanding the changing media, social media and political environment in which it operated.

23. Some of the key communications lessons that the ABS learned were:

(a) Be prepared. Plan and practice for things to go wrong, including identifying clear roles and responsibilities and agreeing to them up front with key players;

(b) Be transparent. Tell people what you are planning to do in detail. If things go wrong there is nothing to hide in terms of what you planned and why;

(c) When things go wrong – act quickly. Apologise, acknowledge what happened, and explain what action you are taking to remedy the situation;

(d) Consider your use of social media (when and how to use it) carefully. On sensitive issues the risk is often greater than the reward.

V. Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

24. The ABS and its staff learned a great deal from the 2016 Census, and importantly learned this quickly, which it was then able to apply to the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey.

25. On 9 August 2017, one year after the 2016 Census, the Australian Government issued a direction to the ABS to undertake the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey (AMPLS). The ABS would be responsible for an extraordinary process asking adult Australians their views on marriage – a core institution of society. Leadership of the ABS was also only too aware that the ABS's reputation had suffered as a result of some process issues with the 2016 Census. The release of quality Census data during 2017, together with the conclusions of the Independent Assurance Panel, had served to restore some confidence. Could the Survey provide the hard-working and dedicated staff of the ABS with an avenue to further repair its reputation?

26. Another swift realisation was the sheer enormity of such an undertaking. The contentious nature of such an exercise, with heartfelt views across the community, would

require the ABS to operate sensitively in a highly emotional and potentially divisive environment.

27. Although the ABS conducts many statistical collections, including some very large scale, the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey was unique. It was designed and conducted in fewer than 100 days and comprised of a single question asked of more than 16 million eligible Australians. To put this in perspective, preparations for the ABS's Census start more than five years before the Census survey; planning for the Marriage Law Postal Survey started on 8 August with many processes settled in short time frames with results announced in fewer than 100 days. It was the biggest single mail-out in Australia with around 30 million items handled by the national postal service, Australia Post.

28. Another element of the challenge was the need to continue to deliver on "business as usual". There was no scope to drop the ball on other key economic, population, social and environmental statistics, including those relating to the labour force, inflation and national balance of payments. Through this period, the ABS issued 163 statistical releases that dealt with issues other than the postal survey from 8 August to 15 November. The bottom line was: it gave the ABS a chance to put into practice what it had learned the hard way from the 2016 Census.

29. It was a unique challenge because of:

- Extremely short timeframes;
- High levels of political engagement and expectation;
- Strong media and community interest in a very politicised and strongly debated issue;
- High levels of priority given to the AMLPS by the ABS, and strong support from across Government;
- Few budget and resource constraints;
- The relatively close proximity to first data release from the 2016 Census and the timing at a low point in the Census cycle;
- Strong focus on risk and issues management. The AMLPS marked the first time that the ABS – in partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) – employed cloud-based solutions to collect and publish data.

VI. How was it achieved?

30. A designated taskforce was set up immediately following the Government's direction to the ABS to undertake the AMLPS. At its peak the Taskforce was just under 500 staff.

31. The survey was a challenge to the ABS given the tight deadline to deliver. The organisation had to find new and innovative ways to work that maximised the delivery of value to the public. The taskforce applied agile methodologies in pragmatic ways to develop systems and quickly adapt to meet the survey's needs.

32. The organisation implemented the most efficient and effective methods of conveying information to and within teams. Stand-up meetings visualising work through Kanban boards created a sense of momentum and shared purpose. The board made it easier to manage the allocation of rapidly evolving tasks.

33. Good decisions were made quickly and the taskforce created an atmosphere where new ideas were able to flourish. Staff were highly motivated and regularly celebrated success, which created a sense of community. They worked extremely hard but found it satisfying and rewarding. The very high levels of internal support were fundamental to the success of the AMLPS.

VII. Key elements from a communications perspective

A. Design of forms

34. The ABS engaged behavioural economists to work with the taskforce communications team to develop all AMLPS materials, including the survey form, letter and materials for specific audiences, such as those living overseas.

35. The materials focused on what the reader needed to do and when they needed to do it. For example, features included the messaging on the envelope stating: "Your Australian Marriage Law Survey is inside" and instructions on the survey form to, "Put the envelope in the mail… today if you can!"

36. Testing showed that this approach was better than more traditional ABS approaches of focusing on a particular deadline.

37. Further, the form asked people to clearly mark one box and the ABS accepted any mark (instead of its usual approach of dictating what mark was required – i.e. a tick, cross or line). This ensured the form worked for all levels of comprehension and did not rule out responses due to non-compliance with the instructions. It made the process customer-centric and as easy as possible.

B. Website

38. The AMPLS website was a new user-friendly website developed solely for the AMPLS to ensure people could easily access simple, clear information, enabling them to request replacement forms and provide a mechanism for feedback.

39. This was a more user-centric approach allowing easier access to the information away from other irrelevant ABS website content. This was an exercise in deploying quickly and cheaply a dedicated website to support specific projects.

40. The ABS engaged early with a number of key IT and technology stakeholders in the Australian Public Service to seek support and assistance. These included: the Prime Minister's Cyber Security Advisor, the Australian Signals Directorate and the Digital Transformation Agency. In addition, we had good support from Amazon Web Services which assisted with the online form option that was used by people for whom post was not an option.

41. The marriage survey website went live on 9 September 2017 only four days after it had been requested. To manage delivery within the constrained time frame, assistance was provided to the ABS from Treasury, the Department of Finance, Acquia and Technocrat.

42. The website featured strong user-centred design and structure. It included comprehensive, plain English information about the survey process, how people could

participate, inclusive strategies for particular segments of the population and more. It was designed to be accessible on a variety of screen sizes, operating systems and internet browsers. Perhaps most importantly – especially in the context of the 2016 Census – it was reliable. A huge amount of testing was undertaken to ensure the website could cope with the significant volumes of traffic that were predicted.

43. On release day, the results were released at 10.04 a.m. with the statistics live on the website less than one minute later. At peak (10.07 a.m.) there were 279,000 requests per minute on the marriage survey website. This equates to approximately 21,000 page hits per minute. Over five minutes 20.5 Gigabytes of traffic engaged the website as Australia (85 per cent of the traffic) and the rest of the world (15 per cent of traffic) accessed the marriage survey data on the ABS website.

C. Focus on participation

44. The ABS knew that success would be defined by high participation in the voluntary survey, just how high was an unknown – 50 per cent was a rough guide for participation in voluntary surveys, but the aim was as high as possible.

45. One of the drivers for achieving a high participation rate was maximising community awareness of how to take part. Media coverage was driving high awareness that the survey was being conducted, however, the ABS needed to add to this awareness on how to participate.

46. A three-stage communications campaign was designed with very clear messages that were delivered in print, social media, radio and TV.

47. Although it was a national survey, the ABS created tailored information for specific groups in the community to ensure they were aware of a range of measures to help them participate.

48. The ABS engaged early and proactively with community organisations and other interested parties to develop a suite of "Inclusion Strategies" to cater for the needs of people in aged-care facilities; people with a disability, injury or illness; people who could not access mail or living in remote areas with less frequent mail services; people experiencing homelessness; and people from multicultural backgrounds.

49. The ABS Taskforce deliberately adopted a calm, neutral and impartial tone for all AMLPS media and communications, given public sensitivities around the topic and the decision to conduct a survey.

50. This was in contrast to the 2016 Census campaign, which used social media extensively and adopted a more active "hearts and mind" approach designed to get the public excited and engaged in the Census.

51. But the tone of the AMLPS did not mean the communications campaign lacked creativity. It had a strong focus on making information clear and visual and the ABS developed infographics and interactive maps that were used in social and traditional media. The AMLPS advertising campaign used social media and digital advertising – this was important for targeting young people and Australians living overseas.

52. The overall aim was to push service delivery to the website and information lines, restrict the volume of conversation about the survey process and present a neutral position because it was important that the ABS been seen as impartial in its communications.

53. The ABS used tools to monitor community sentiment about the survey and evaluate communications. It also allowed for monitoring and interception of misinformation and to identify key influencers that the ABS could work with.

D. Privacy

54. Privacy and security were paramount in the survey. The ABS placed the highest importance on the protection and confidentiality and the postal survey used a unique code to ensure that no one's details were seen or stored with their survey response.

55. This led to a "privacy-by-design" approach to the survey with a range of measures to minimise risks around collection, use, access and disclosure of personal information. At the end of the survey the ABS destroyed all 12.7 million paper and electronic responses.

56. The ABS undertook extensive and comprehensive quality assurance in the running of the AMLPS to promote community confidence and confidence in the design, implementation and execution of the survey. The community expected the ABS to ensure that the survey had plebiscite-like measures to assure its integrity, including independent assurance of quality controls.

"The ABS has taken a strong 'privacy by design' approach to protecting the privacy of Australians in designing the Survey. I am satisfied with the range of privacy measures that the ABS has embedded into the design of the Survey and supporting functions. I am also satisfied that the mitigation strategies and response plans are effective and appropriate in the context of the Survey."

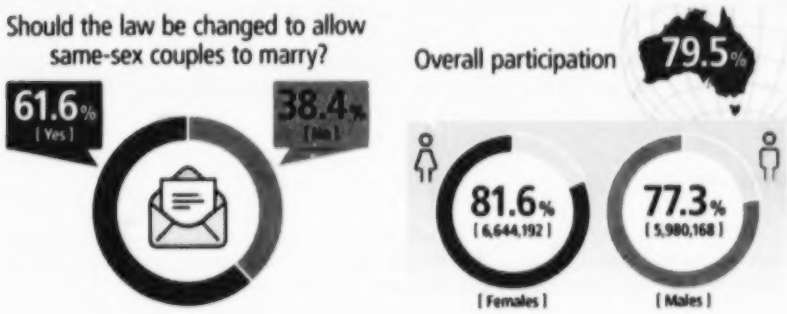
> Malcolm Compton AM, Managing Director, Information Integrity Solutions Pty Ltd; Privacy Commissioner of Australia 1999-2004

E. Third party endorsements and partnerships

57. Instead of trying to explain complex issues, reassure the public and rely on a "trust us" stance, the ABS engaged with a range of experts, including independent auditors, the former Australian Privacy Commissioner and Government security professionals, to either make public statements in advance on key issues or be ready to speak on our behalf when required.

58. Within hours of the announcement of the Survey, the ABS engaged with key stakeholders on design and to communicate the importance of working together. These partnerships included representatives of older Australians, multicultural communities, and yes/no campaigners to create direct contacts and encourage them to raise issues with us directly and not the media. This reduced their readiness to criticise and reduced any misinformation.

Figure 3
The results



59. Some in the media dubbed the AMLPS, "Bigger than Brexit" because of the survey's participation rate of 79.5 per cent. By way of comparison, the Brexit vote in 2016 in the United Kingdom had a turnout of 72.2 per cent and Ireland's 2015 referendum on same-sex marriage had 60.5 per cent of eligible voters participate.

60. Australia's Parliament legislated for marriage equality on 7 December 2017 and a month later on 9 January 2018 same-sex wedding ceremonies were held.

61. The Australian National University's Social Research Centre did an online and telephone survey that asked respondents to rank events that had the biggest impact on their lives. It found that Australia's same-sex marriage postal survey was regarded as having the greatest impact on the country. Even though this survey was conducted shortly after the Marriage Law Postal Survey and would have been fresh in respondents' minds, it nevertheless shows the impact it had on the community and how important Australians rated this issue.

VIII. Conclusion

62. The ABS operates in a fast-moving information age where opportunities, expectations and technology are all moving at a considerably faster pace than in the past.

63. Data agencies like the ABS need to navigate this more complex contemporary environment where there is reduced public confidence in government and where all information is questioned, even official statistics.

64. Although the ABS's reputation took a hit in 2016, it recovered in 2017. The Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey was a challenge – the ABS was not expecting it until it came. It was intense for those involved and for those across the ABS who gave up staff and backfilled positions.

65. The Survey was a whole-of-ABS effort, delivered to a standard that exceeded the community's and the Government's expectations and helped to rebuild our traditionally high levels of trust.

66. The bottom line is this: expect the unexpected. In this complex and fast-moving world we are all going to get thrown the occasional curve ball. Complexity and uncertainty are the new normal for modern statistical organisations.

67. Effective communication is critical in ensuring our organisations can respond well to this change and ambiguity, maintaining community trust and ultimately meeting our purpose to provide reliable information for the public good.

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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

"An outgoing expert personality" – using a brand platform as a tool to improve external communication

Note by Statistics Sweden

Summary

This document presents how Statistics Sweden is using a brand platform to improve the external communication and to engage better with users. Among other things, the platform describes how Statistics Sweden wants to be perceived by the users in every kind of interaction. It is a known fact that there is sometimes a gap between how the staff at Statistics Sweden feel about the users and how the users perceive that attitude. One area where the platform has been used with success is the Statistics Service that answers questions about statistics by phone and email. The most important tool was a series of workshops where the staff of Statistics Sweden (about 10 people) created their own guidelines on how to express Statistics Sweden's personality linguistically, with the support of a plain language expert. Through regular audits of their email replies by the plain language expert, it is made sure that the work leads to concrete improvements.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 1: "Strategic communications" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. Regular surveys show that the general public has great confidence in Statistics Sweden, but these surveys also indicate that the majority know very little about what this government agency does. It is also known that many people confuse Statistics Sweden with other survey companies, including commercial ones. Furthermore, there seems to be a gap between how Statistics Sweden's staff feel about the users and how the users see Statistics Sweden. The staff want to be helpful, friendly and engaging but in their external communication, Statistics Sweden often come across as introvert and hard to understand.

2. To improve the external communication and engage better with users, the communication department, in collaboration with human resources department and an external consultant, have created a brand platform. The platform consists of, among other things, a logo, a graphical profile, guidelines for using pictures and colours, as well as a personality for Statistics Sweden.

3. The personality describes how Statistics Sweden wants the users to perceive the agency when they visit the website, attend seminars, read emails and letters or report data in surveys, in short, in any kind of interaction with Statistics Sweden. The personality is intended to be the core guide to all external communication.

4. This document is focused on how Statistics Sweden has used the brand platform to communicate better via the so-called Statistics Service that answers questions about statistics by phone and email. The most important tool was a series of workshops in which the staff of Statistics Service created their own guidelines on how to express Statistics Sweden's personality linguistically. Through regular audits of their email replies by a plain language expert, it is made sure that the work has led to concrete improvements.

II. From directives and steering documents to brand platform

5. "But I am not outgoing, I am an introvert. So are most people in this department!" This is not an uncommon reaction when Statistics Sweden's personality (see the box below) is presented to the staff. The personality is the component of the brand platform that is intended to guide all external communication. It describes how Statistics Sweden wants to be perceived by the target groups, regardless of channel and medium.

Statistics Sweden's personality:

Statistics Sweden is an outgoing expert personality that:

- is passionate about their job;
- instils great confidence;
- is contemporary in expression;
- participates in the public discourse.

6. As part of the implementation of the brand platform, staff of the communication department regularly present the personality to colleagues in other departments. Invariably, this leads to interesting discussions. Apart from the reaction mentioned above

about being introverts, another common reaction is "yes, the personality describes exactly what we are like". It is of course encouraging that the statisticians are comfortable with Statistics Sweden's personality description. However, this reaction also reveals the assumption that a positive attitude towards the recipient is converted into text without effort. Unfortunately, this rarely happens – training is often needed to communicate successfully. This is where the personality can play an important role. Introvert statisticians need not worry, though. Employees can be as introvert as they like, but in their external communication, they must contribute to Statistics Sweden's personality so that the organization is perceived according to the brand platform.

III. The work process to create the brand platform

7. In 2014, the Director General decided that Statistics Sweden should have a brand platform. A project group was formed with six people from the communication department, one person from human resources and one external consultant. The main objective of involving human resources was to include employer branding in the project.

8. The work process consisted of three steps. First, the project group went through the relevant internal and external steering documents, including directives from the government, the Official Statistics Act, the European Code of Practice, as well as Statistics Sweden's 2020 Strategy and the communication strategy. The purpose was to extract Statistics Sweden's commitment to the community—users, respondents, paying customers, general public, researchers. What does Statistics Sweden *have* to do and what does it *want* to do?

9. The second step was to put these results into words, a description of what Statistics Sweden is and what sets it apart from other similar organisations in Sweden.

10. The third part of the brand platform process was to convert the description into, among other things, a visual identity and a personality, i.e. a description of how Statistics Sweden wants the recipients of the external communication to feel about the organisation when they are communicating with it. After the work was finished, the brand platform was handed over to consultants in graphic design to create a redesigned logo and a graphic manual that expresses a consistent visual identity across channels and media. The final step is the implementation phase.

Example of implementation: email replies from Statistics Service

11. In 2017, Statistics Service replied to 13,200 telephone enquiries and 5,500 e-mail enquiries about statistics. Statistics Service is one of the most important channels for external communication and, therefore, an important area to start implementing the brand platform.

12. It was the task of the plain language expert (a member of the brand platform project group) to help Statistics Service to improve their emails using the new Statistics Sweden personality. In total, individual members of Statistics Service spent c. 5 hours each on workshops over a period of 6 months. First, the plain language expert conducted an audit against criteria of plain language and reader friendliness (in accordance with the Swedish Language Law) of around 10 emails per staff member. The results of this audit showed several strong points, such as that most emails:

- contained only relevant information;

- had the most important information first;
- were not more formal than necessary;
- were free of writing mistakes.

13. However, problems were also found, mostly relating to reader-friendliness in 70% of the email replies. In general, the replies were very short. Many of them consisted of little else than "Dear *N*", a link to a table, graph, file or database query, and "Kind regards, Statistics Sweden". The main problem with this is that without a description of the statistics that the link leads to, it may be unclear to the recipient what he or she has received in the email reply. As a consequence, the recipients may ask themselves "Is this what I asked for? Or is it merely something similar? Is it useful to me?" This kind of confusion is of course unnecessary. Most email queries to Statistics Service contain a core question: "Do you have statistics on …?" or "How many …?" It is an obvious goal to give a clear answer to the core question.

14. In addition to this, another result stood out: in around 10% of the email replies, the sender stated that they had looked for the statistics on Statistics Sweden's website but were unable to find it. None of the replies contained a comment on this.

15. The process towards improving the email communication began with a discussion with the Statistics Service group (c. ten people) of the result of the audit. The initial goal was to agree on the problem and to relate it to Statistics Sweden's personality. The conclusion of the discussion was that two components of the personality were especially relevant to the email communication with users: "outgoing expert personality" and "instils great confidence". It was agreed that in the majority of the replies, the group did not fully express an outgoing expert personality and risked not instilling great confidence.

16. The task after that was to create editorial guidelines, based on the results of the audit and the personality. In one workshop, devoted to revising examples of email replies, the core question discussed was "What should a helpful email reply that reflects an outgoing expert personality and instils great confidence look like?" The finished guidelines are shown in the box below.

Editorial guidelines for Statistics Service:

At Statistics Service, we

1. Explain what the recipients get from us.
2. Always include links to the statistics – not just the figures.
3. Express that we understand that scb.se can be tricky to use when users state that they have tried but failed to find the statistics on our website.
4. Express regret if we are unable to help.
5. Apologise if something went wrong.
6. Invite the recipients to get back to us if they have more questions.

17. To ensure good quality, follow-up audits of email replies have been conducted by the plain language expert. The plan is to continue with follow-up audits every 6 months. After each audit, there was a short workshop, in which the plain language expert

presented the results and discussed with the group what measures to take to improve the results in the next audit. So far, two follow-up audits have been completed. The first one was conducted a couple of months after the guidelines had been finished, and the second one around six months later. Like the initial audit, 100 emails were included. In the follow-up audits, the emails were reviewed against the new guidelines, so the results of the two audits are only partly comparable to those of the initial audit. The results of the follow-up audits are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The portion of replies that adhere to the guidelines

Guideline	Follow-up audit 1	Follow-up audit 2
1 Explain what the recipients get from us	80%	75%
2 Always include links to the statistics	90%	75%
3 Express that we understand that scb.se can be tricky to use	20%	40%
4 Express regret if we are unable to help	40%	56%
5 Apologise if something went wrong	0%*	100%**
6 Invite the recipients to get back to us if they have more questions	40%	78%

*) There were only 3 instances where the guideline could be applied.
**) There was only 1 instance where the guideline could be applied.

18. The most important improvement in the follow-up audits concerns guideline 1. In the initial audit, only 30% of the replies were found to be complete and clear. In most cases, the problem was that the reply included a link to statistics on Statistics Sweden's website, but without any description of the contents of that statistics. In the first follow-up audit, there is a notable increase from 30% to 80% complete and clear replies.

19. However, the results also show that further improvements are needed in most other areas. Guidelines 3-6 were only followed in 40% or less of the replies in the first follow-up audit. In the second follow-up audit, the adherence has increased but more work is needed to reach a satisfactory level.

20. The final interesting finding is that due to a misunderstanding, the guidelines were not distributed to the group until after the follow-up audit. This means that the improvements in their communication were the result of the workshops, not the guidelines themselves.

IV. Ownership and audits for concrete change

21. The main issue of the work presented in this paper is how to implement a brand platform and create concrete change. Everybody knows that a document with guidelines

is not enough. Statistics Sweden believes that the process chosen, as described above is a successful one. Recent research about plain language work in Sweden and Denmark also shows that a short training, e.g. half a day or a day, most often does not lead to change.

22. The main finding is that there are two keys to success of the work:

- **Ownership**: The most important step was to establish a standard for high quality email replies from Statistics Service. A crucial factor is that the group decided on the standard and guidelines. The plain language expert guided the group and supervised their work throughout the process, but did not provide them with the guidelines;
- **Audits**: Regular audits make up another important component of the work. The first audit was necessary to identify problem areas in the communication. The follow-up audits help keep the group involved and maintain continuous improvements.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

23. At Statistics Sweden, service, accessibility and usability are increasingly important aspects of the mission. One reason for this development are increased legislative demands in the shape of new or revised laws e.g. the Language Act, the Discrimination Act, Administrative Procedure Act, and the European Web Accessibility Directive.

24. A brand platform is an excellent tool to ensure high and consistent quality of the external communication, across channels and media. However, for a brand platform to have effect, the implementation is crucial. Good written communication is hard to produce. At Statistics Sweden, everyone is expected to communicate externally and most employees are not communication professionals, so they need support and guidance.

25. In sum, it is fair to say that statistical institutes need to work harder to communicate in a more user-friendly way in order to fulfil Statistics Sweden's mission to enhance the use of official statistics in society. Exchanging experiences and ideas about this with other statistical offices would be very interesting.

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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication
Session 2 - Communication crises - issue and reputation management

Preliminary thoughts on issue and crisis communications from the HLG-MOS Strategic Communication Project

Note by the High-level Group for Modernization of Official Statistics

Summary

The document presents the initial thinking on issue and crisis communications based on a project on strategic communications that is carried out in 2018 under the High-level Group for Modernization of Official Statistics. Effective issue and crisis management is critical to protect and maintain the reputation of a statistical office. All statistical organizations should establish an issues management process to better prepare the organization to respond quickly and efficiently when an issue occurs. Communications should be factual, transparent, accountable, and accessible to all stakeholders. Issues management protocols should be tested and lessons learned from the testing and implementation of the process should be used to enhance further the organizations' preparedness for effective response.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 2: "Communication crises - issue and reputation management" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. Sometimes things go wrong. All statistical organizations encounter challenging issues and unanticipated crises. The purpose of issue and crisis communications planning is to mitigate the procedural and reputational damage that adverse events may trigger by ensuring that statistical organizations are well prepared to respond to problems publicly in a timely and appropriate manner.

2. Challenging issues can originate from within or outside the statistical organization.

3. Internal issues could include the following:

- Statistical – estimation errors, methodological shortcomings;
- Corporate – corruption, conflict of interest, incompetence, unwise public statements by an employee (especially on social media);
- Continuity – system failures (e.g. website down);
- Security – confidentiality breaches.

4. External issues might include:

- Reputational attacks – allegations of bias, distortion, or "fake news";
- Political interference (real or perceived) – premature disclosure of data by political actors, pressure to change or reschedule releases, national or international political instability;
- Continuity – weather events, cyber-attack, bomb threat, fire, pandemic, violence in or near worksite;
- Statistical – stakeholders challenging data (e.g. different groups disagree with organization's figures.).

5. Most of these events will require coordinated responses from multiple areas within the statistical organization. Staff in information technology, statistical methods, administration and security, etc. may have very significant roles to play. In some cases, a continuity management team may exist with defined responsibilities. In all cases, however, corporate communications will be vital. The remainder of this paper will focus on the communications role in issue and crisis management.

II. Event and crisis communications principles

6. Consistent with general communications principles, during an event or crisis a statistical organization should:

- Communicate facts as quickly as possible;
- Provide updates as circumstances change;
- Ensure the safety of its community and the continued operation of essential services to its stakeholders.

7. The statistical organization should convey facts (what it knows) in a timely fashion using multiple forms of media. It should not speculate. Providing factual information is especially important in the first minutes, hours and days of a crisis. The goal is to be transparent, accountable, and accessible to all stakeholders, while respecting legal and privacy obligations.

8. One caution to keep in mind is using social media carefully. Social media can be an effective and efficient means to reach a broad audience rapidly with messages that support the management of an issue or crisis. On the other hand, trying to correct a falsehood on social media may be as likely to proliferate the falsehood, as it is to promote the correction.

III. Issue or crisis?

9. Not every situation is a crisis. Understanding the difference been an issue and a crisis is essential to response development. An issue could impact a program or project outcome. Issues can develop into crises. A crisis is a situation that needs to be addressed with urgency. It may threaten the long-term reputation of the organization, and may impede continuity of operations.

10. An issue can be identified when:

- The statistical organization's staff have adequate time to assess the situation, frame the issue, and implement solutions to reduce the adverse impact;
- All or most operations continue as normal;
- No injury, illness or death has occurred;
- A mid-level manager may be authorized to sign off on the response.

11. A crisis, by contrast:

- Requires an immediate response;
- Has the potential to interrupt or disable an organizations' operations;
- May include injury, illness or death;
- Requires personal intervention by the organization's top leadership;
- Involves multiple bodies, including media, stakeholders, staff, and partners.

12. A crisis will usually initiate a parallel set of processes within the organization that are far broader than communication, for example a continuity management plan.

13. Strategic issues management is structurally similar to crisis communications in that it follows the same general sequence of steps. However, there is usually more flexibility in developing a response, with more time to weigh options and determine appropriate and effective mitigating procedures. Table 1 provides an issue/crisis matrix.

Table 1
Issue/crisis matrix

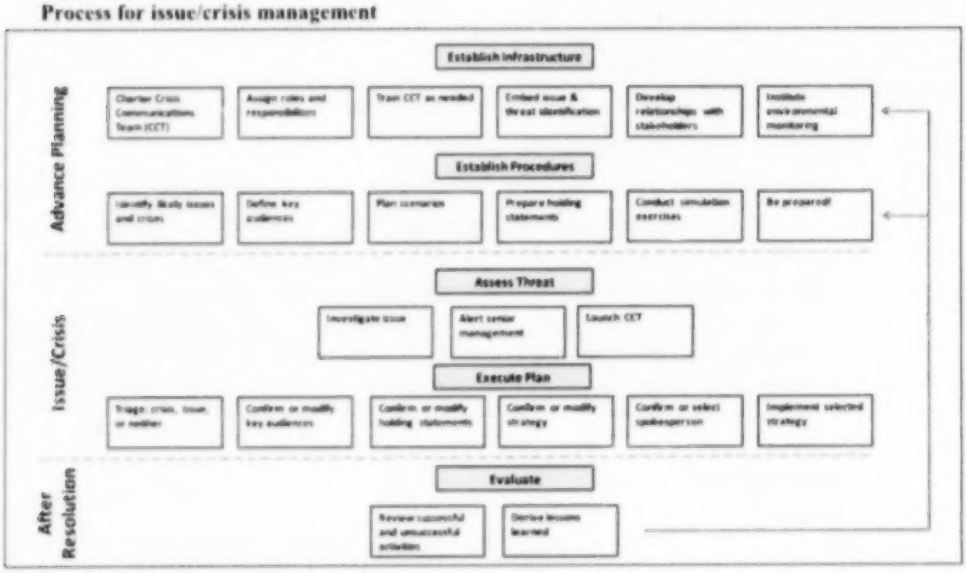
Impact	Timing	
	Now	In the future
High Threat to organisation's existence or long term reputation, likely high level of media, social media and political attention		**Advanced planning to prevent or mitigate, highest level of approvals, resource appropriately, inform key stakeholders, monitor regularly.**

Impact	Timing	
	Now	In the future
Medium Threat to short term reputation, likely medium level attention	**Immediate action and high-level approval required.**	Action plan to prevent or mitigate, approval levels to be determined, monitor
Low Not a threat to reputation, only certain groups interested	Decide whether to act or not. Local level action.	Plan to prevent or mitigate issue. Local level action.

IV. Managing issues

14. This section describes a process to manage issues and crises using a strategic, planned and controlled approach. Figure 1 shows the process flow of this procedure.

Figure 1
Process for issue/crisis management



A. Phase 1 – Advance planning

15. The purpose of advance planning is to define a process, assign responsibilities, obtain management buy-in, and prepare draft responses, or "holding statements", to be used in the event of an issue or crisis.

16. The procedure for advance planning begins with establishing the organizational infrastructure necessary to respond rapidly, with full organizational authority:

- Charter a crisis communications team composed of senior personnel:
  - Collect contact information;
  - Establish ground rules (quorum, decision-making process);
  - Determine communications (e.g. teleconference, in-person meetings, etc.);
  - Assign roles and responsibilities;
  - Train members of the crisis communications team, as needed.

Figure 2
Examples of crisis communications roles and team membership

Example: Crisis communications roles

- The Executive Oversight Board strategically plans the crisis communications policy.
- The crisis communications team (CCT) determines and enacts the communications tactics best suited to the crisis situation. Additional members may be called upon when deemed necessary by the core CCT.
- The management in charge of the area that is involved in the situation that brought about the crisis resolves the situation and keeps the CCT informed. The Senior Executive for the affected program or designee (if program-specific) joins the CCT for the duration of the crisis.

Example: Crisis communications team membership

The team will consist of senior management officials. At a minimum, the core team will include:

- Head of Statistical Organization
- Deputy Head of Statistical Organization
- Director of Public Affairs
- Senior Executive for Communications or designee
- Senior Executive for Administration or designee

Additional members may be called upon when deemed necessary by the core CCT.

- Embed threat identification within the organizational structure:
  - Institute a corporate culture where staff at all levels are alert to potential issues and crises, and know how to report suspected threats;
- Develop relationships with external stakeholder networks so that they, too, are encouraged to identify threats and notify the statistical organization;
- Institute environmental monitoring (e.g. traditional media and social media tracking).

17. The second phase of advance planning involves thinking ahead to potential threats and determining optimal reactions:

- Identify likely issues and crises[1];

[1] There is overlap between issue and crisis communications and risk management (see https://statswiki.unece.org/display/GORM/Risk+Management). In particular, the risk assessment process includes identification, analysis and measurement, and weighting (risk prioritization). Risk identification feeds into the communications planning by identifying likely issues and crisis; issue and crisis communications, in turn, feeds into risk analysis and weighting.

- Define key audiences;
- Plan scenarios;
- Preparing holding statements;
- Conduct simulation exercises (e.g. table top run-throughs);
- Integrate lessons learned from previous issues and crises;
- Be prepared. Accepting the inevitability of crises. Practice responses until they become ingrained.

Figure 3.
Example of a holding statement

Example: Holding statement

At **(X:00 PM/AM date)**, the **Statistical Organization** announced that data from the **(date and name)** news release that was scheduled for release on **(time and date)** were inadvertently released from the website. The release can be found here: **(link)**.

18. To be successful, this phase needs to be detailed, comprehensive, and demands buy-in from the highest level of the statistical organization.

B. Phase 2 – Issue and crisis communications execution

19. The purpose of this phase is to manage efficiently and effectively a live issue or crisis.

20. When a potential issue has been identified and reported, the communications manager must:

- Quickly investigate the issue;
- Alert senior management;
- Launch the issue or crisis communications group.

21. The role of the issue or crisis communications group is to:

- Assess the issue;
- Decide if it is an issue or a crisis;
- Decide if a proactive or reactive approach is required, or if no communication at all is merited;
- Confirm or tailor key audiences;
- Confirm or tailor holding statements;
- Confirm or tailor the desired approach (e.g. what channels);
- Confirm or select spokesperson(s);
- Implement the selected strategy.

22. Key to the success of this phase is that the process is efficient, effective, and includes timely decision-making.

C. Phase 3 – Evaluation

23. The final stage, after an issue or crisis has been weathered, is to evaluate the effectiveness of the communications process, and use the results to inform future planning phases. The review process should take place promptly to ensure that the lessons learned are fresh and comprehensive.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

24. Effective issues/crisis management is critical to protect and maintain the reputation of a statistical office. All statistical organizations should establish an issue management process to better prepare the organization to respond quickly and efficiently when an issue occurs. Issue management protocols should be tested and lessons learned from the testing and implementation of the process should be used to enhance further the organizations' preparedness for effective response.

25. This document has described the initial thinking of the HLG-MOS Strategic Communication Project. The Project is continuing with its plan of work this year to provide further support for statistical organizations in the development of their respective issues management protocols.